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## March Into Spring with Fresh, Oil-Free Italian Cooking

Hi ,

This week I walked into the grocery store and stopped in my tracks — asparagus, artichokes, and peas stacked high like spring was officially here and giving us permission to cook differently.

When I completed my third *PLANTifull Fare with Italian Flair* ecookbook, I thought I had content mapped out for the next 35 weeks. I felt organized. Prepared. Even a little proud of myself.

And then the beautiful stalks of asparagus showed up.

You know the ones — vibrant green, firm, freshly trimmed. Not dried out or wrinkled. Not pitifully thin or thick and woody.

Spring vegetables have a way of changing plans. They don't follow my content calendar. And honestly? I'm glad they don't.

### Recipes

#### Asparagus Risotto | Easy Rice Cooker Recipe

This oil-free, dairy-free risotto feels restaurant-worthy — but your rice cooker does all the work.

Perfect for guests or a cozy Tuesday night, it's creamy and comforting without the heaviness. Arborio rice and unsweetened soy milk create that luxurious texture, while fresh thyme and a squeeze of lemon brighten the asparagus, making each bite taste like spring.

Let your rice cooker do the stirring while you enjoy the aroma. I also love a [farro](#) version cooked in a Dutch oven — nuttier, heartier, but just as creamy.

[🔗 Get the recipe here](#)

#### Plant-Based Pasta e Piselli | Easy Italian Pasta and Peas

This quick, spring-inspired pasta highlights sweet green peas and fresh herbs in the simplest, most comforting way.

My grandbabies love it when I make it with elbow macaroni — tiny peas tucked into every curve, easy for little hands learning to use a spoon and fork.

Jeff and I lean toward trecce, orecchiette, or cavatappi where the peas settle into the little crevices or cups like they were designed to live there.

Same ingredients. Different shapes. Completely different experience.

[Get the recipe here](#)



### Kitchen Hack: Sauté Without Oil

One question I get often: "But Donna... how do you sauté without oil?"

Here's exactly how I do it.

<b>Water-Sauté Method</b>	<b>Dry-Sauté Method</b>
<p> <b>Water-Sauté Method</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Start with a splash of vegetable broth or water in a skillet.</li><li>• Cook vegetables over medium heat.</li><li>• Add small amounts of liquid as needed. This softens veggies and builds flavor without sticking or burning.</li></ul> <p> Start with a splash of vegetable broth or water in a skillet.</p>	<p> <b>Dry-Sauté Method</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preheat a non-stick or stainless steel pan over medium heat.</li><li>• Add chopped vegetables directly to the hot pan—no oil needed.</li><li>• Stir frequently. Vegetables release their natural moisture and lightly caramelize for rich, oil-free flavor.</li></ul> <p> When a sprinkle of water dances on surface, pan is ready to use.</p>

### Why These Methods Work

Both methods rely on the vegetables' natural moisture to cook them fully and develop flavor — no added fat required.

#### Water-Sauté

A splash of broth or water prevents sticking while gently steaming vegetables.

The result? Tender, evenly cooked veggies with concentrated flavor.

### **Dry-Sauté**

Add vegetables to a preheated pan and stir frequently. They release their own moisture, lightly caramelize, and develop deeper flavor naturally.

 **Tip:** Use water-sauté for softer, tender vegetables. Use dry-sauté when you want a little browning and richer flavor.

Oil-free cooking doesn't mean flavor-free cooking.

## **From My Kitchen to Yours**

Austin is just starting to warm up, and I can feel that seasonal shift from cozy to fresh happening in my kitchen.

Are you team asparagus, artichokes, or peas this month?

Hit reply and tell me what spring vegetable you're cooking this week. I truly love hearing from you.

Buon appetito,

~ **Donna**



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## **Ready to start?**

My goal is to inspire **you** to embrace a plant-fueled lifestyle for a healthier, more vibrant life.

Tell me what classes interest you, or grab a few helpful freebies—and don't forget a little flavor boost with my favorite kitchen ingredient, California Balsamic vinegars!

 **Cooking Class Interest**

Tell me what classes you'd like to see

## Free Salad Dressing Recipes

Oil- & dairy-free inspiration

## Health Goal Worksheet

Rechargers vs. Depleters

## Transform Your Recipes (California Balsamics)

Add rich, tangy flavor to salads, roasted veggies, and desserts



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