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Serves 3 or 4

Breakfast Ricotta with Berries & Maple Syrup -

2 tbl. unsalted butter
3 tbl. blanched, sliced almonds
1/8 tsp. fleur de sel or Kosher salt
1/3 cup pure maple syrup
2 cups Homemade Ricotta (recipe follows)
2 tbl. honey
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
1 pint mixed berries, such as raspberries, blueberries and strawberries
Toasted brioche or challah, for serving

Melt the butter in a small sauté pan over medium heat. Stir in the almonds and sauté, tossing frequently, for 2 to 3 minutes, until the almonds are golden brown. Sprinkle with the fleur de sel, add the maple syrup and keep warm.

Meanwhile, combine the ricotta, honey, and vanilla and divide it among the breakfast plates. Surround the ricotta with the berries and spoon the almond and maple syrup mixture over the ricotta. Place a slice of toasted brioche on each plate and serve warm.

Homemade Ricotta (makes 2 cups): 4 cups (1 quart) whole milk 2 cups (1 pint) heavy cream 1 tsp. Kosher salt 3 tbl. good white wine vinegar

Set a medium-mesh sieve over a deep bowl. Line the sieve with two double layers of cheesecloth and dampen the cheesecloth.

Pour the milk and cream into a large stainless-steel or enameled pot and stir in the salt. Bring to a full rolling boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally (a full rolling boil means that you can't stir the mixture down with a spoon. Turn off the heat and pour in the vinegar. Allow the mixture to stand for one minute, until it curdles.

Pour the mixture into the cheesecloth-lined sieve and allow it to drain into the bowl, discarding the liquid as it collects in the bowl. Allow the mixture to drain at room temperature for 20 to 25 minutes. The longer you allow it to drain, the thicker it will be. Transfer the ricotta to another bowl, discarding the cheesecloth and any liquid. Use immediately or cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate.

Credit: Ina Garten