

Love and Chicken Parmesan

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/42373284) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/42373284>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov & David Hollander
Characters:	Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander , David Hollander , Yuna Hollander
Additional Tags:	Fluff , Domestic Fluff , Cooking , secret family recipe , No Plot/Plotless
Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of Flufftober 2022
Collections:	Flufftober 2022
Stats:	Published: 2022-10-14 Words: 1,248 Chapters: 1/1

Love and Chicken Parmesan

by [Layne_162](#)

Summary

David let's Ilya in on a secret about the family chicken parmesan recipe.

Absolutely no plot to be found.

Submitted for the prompt: Secret Family Recipe

Ilya grabbed a bag of breadcrumbs off the supermarket shelf and tossed it into the shopping cart.

"Nope." Shane said, bringing the cart he was pushing to a standstill. "These aren't the right kind."

Ilya looked down at his phone to double check the shopping list David had texted him that morning.

"It just says breadcrumbs. These are breadcrumbs, yes?"

"Trust me," Shane said as he returned the bag to the shelf. "When Dad says breadcrumbs, he specifically means panko."

"Then why didn't he say that?"

"I have no idea, but if you want to make Hollander Chicken Parmesan right, you gotta have panko breadcrumbs."

Ilya *did* want to get the recipe right, so he searched the shelves until he found a cardboard canister labeled 'organic panko' and picked it up to show Shane. "Good?"

"Yup," Shane nodded, looking down at their mostly full cart. "Anything else we need?"

"Just puree tomato."

"Ok, follow me. Dad has some very specific opinions about tomatoes too."

"Of course he does," Ilya laughed as he shook his head and followed Shane to the next aisle.

A few hours later, Shane and Ilya stood on the Hollanders' front porch, grocery bags in hand. David had offered to teach Ilya the family chicken parmesan recipe as a belated anniversary gift. Obviously, the Hollanders didn't need to get him an anniversary present, but Ilya liked the idea of being a part of a Hollander family tradition so he'd happily accepted.

Ilya rebalanced the bags in his hands and knocked on the front door.

"Come in!" Yuna yelled from inside.

Ilya opened the door and shouted, "Privet, mama Hollander."

"Privet moi synov'ya. My na kukhne," Yuna responded, beckoning them to the kitchen.

"Your Russian is getting much better." Ilya smiled as they set the bags down on the kitchen counter.

"Thank you, I've been practicing. I have a 120 day streak in Duolingo."

"What?!" Shane said. "How is it possible that your Duolingo streak is longer than mine? I've been working on my Russian for years now."

"Well, dear, some of us didn't spend the entire month of July partying and falling off floats at Stanley Cup celebrations."

Ilya snickered.

“I didn’t fall off the float! It was just a little - stumble.” Shane attempted to defend himself, before pointing an accusing finger at Ilya. “ *Someone* let Chiron wrap his leash around my ankles.”

“I don’t know what you are talking about, Shane.”

“Hello, boys!” David said as he entered the kitchen wearing a black apron with Ottawa Centaurs 2023 Stanley Cup Champions embroidered on the chest. Apparently, the NHL would put a championship logo on just about anything.

Shane gave his dad a hug. "I like the apron.”

“Yes,” Ilya said, “Me too.”

“I’m glad, because I bought you a matching one.” David tossed him the apron.

“Perfect.” Ilya immediately slipped the fabric over his neck and tied the straps around his waist.

Then Yuna put a hand on Shane’s shoulder, “Alright, let’s go see what the Blue Jays are up to and let our husbands cook us dinner.”

Ilya rubbed the thinly sliced chicken breasts with salt, pepper, and oregano and placed them into the refrigerator.

“Ok,” Ilya said, as he turned on the sink to wash his hands, “What’s next?”

“While the chicken is brining, we can make the parmigiana sauce.”

They worked together in pleasant silence, as they always did when they spent time alone. David chopped onions and minced garlic as Ilya pulled out a saucepan to heat the olive oil. Once the oil began to shimmer, David silently handed Ilya the cutting board and Ilya used his knife to slide the vegetables into the pan. They hit the oil with a satisfying hiss and the kitchen filled with the enticing fragrance of sauteing onions and garlic.

“So,” Ilya asked as they continued to work on the sauce, “Who taught you to make chicken parmesan? Do you have an Italian grandmother I do not know about?”

David smiled at him conspiratorially. “Can I tell you a secret?”

“Of course.” Ilya leaned towards him.

“Shane doesn’t know this, but it’s not actually an old family recipe. I taught myself to cook chicken parmesan in college, because I was trying to impress Yuna.”

“Oh yes?” Ilya said with an amused smile as he added some chili flakes and herbs to the pan.

“I couldn’t afford to take her out to nice restaurants, so I came up with a plan to cook her a fancy dinner at my apartment.”

“Very smart. I have used the same move myself.”

David laughed and poured some white wine into the pan.

“How can that be true? You’ve been rich since you were 18.”

Ilya continued to stir the onions and garlic as the wine worked its magic. “I could afford the fancy restaurants, but there was someone I could not take out on dates for ... other reasons.”

“Ah, of course. I should’ve thought of that. Sorry.”

“It is okay,” Ilya shrugged. “Tell me how it went when you made chicken parmesan for Yuna.”

“Well,” David said as he added the tomato puree and chicken stock to the sauce. “After I invited her over, I panicked because I didn’t know how to cook anything good enough for her. One of my teammates loaned me an Italian cookbook and suggested I try the chicken parmigiana recipe. He promised me that Yuna would love it.”

David smiled and shook his head. “The problem was the recipe used all these techniques I’d never heard of before: brining, descaling, shallow frying. I had to go to the library and check out a book on the art of cooking before I could even figure out what the recipe meant.”

Ilya suppressed a laugh. Doing extensive research for a date was such a Hollander thing to do. “Did she love it?”

“Well, she agreed to another date after and eventually deigned to marry me so I must have done something right.”

Ilya beamed. “That is very cute.”

“Yes, well.” David blushed a bit, and Ilya caught a glimpse of Shane in his expression.

After a few moments of silence, he continued. “Anyway the chicken should be done brining soon, so let’s get the oven preheating and another pan ready for the shallow fry.”

“You got it, Chef.”

An hour later, when the mozzarella had just begun to turn a perfect golden brown, Ilya pulled the tray of chicken parmesan from the oven and walked it to the Hollander’s dining room.

“That smells delicious, dear,” Yuna said, as Ilya laid the dish on the trivet in the center of the table.

“Just one final touch.” Ilya grabbed a handful of the chopped basil David had prepared earlier and sprinkled it over the melted mozzarella. “Voila!”

When he took his seat next to Shane, Shane leaned over, resting his hand on Ilya’s knee beneath the table. “Did you have fun with my Dad?”

“Always,” Ilya whispered back.

“I hope he didn’t tell you any more embarrassing stories from my childhood.”

“No,” Ilya smiled. “Not this time.”

“Good. You have too much leverage on me already.”

David cleared his throat and lifted his wine glass aloft, “I’d like to propose a toast to my two sons, whom I love very much.”

Shane gave Ilya a sappy smile and squeezed his knee.

Ilya reached for the glass in front of his plate. “And I would like to propose a toast as well. To David, Yuna, and chicken parmesan.”

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