CHEDDAR CHICKEN TENDERS WITH WILTED SPINACH

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 10 MIN START TO FINISH: 30 MIN

Don't be surprised when this colorful, kid-friendly meal is also a hit with adults.

- **2 tablespoons olive oil**
- **1½ cups Cheez-It Cheddar crackers (3 oz)**
- **¾ teaspoon black pepper**
- **1¼ lb chicken tenders (not coated or cooked)**
- **⅓ cup Dijon mustard**
- **2 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- **1 (12- to 16-oz) bag baby spinach**
- **¼ teaspoon salt**

▸Put oven rack in lower third of oven and preheat oven to 475°F. Brush a large shallow baking pan with oil (2 tablespoons). ▸Pulse crackers in a food processor until finely ground, then transfer to a wide shallow bowl and stir in ½ teaspoon pepper. Toss tenders with mustard in a large bowl until coated, then dredge, 2 at a time, in cracker crumbs until evenly coated. Arrange tenders in 1 layer, without crowding, in oiled pan. Bake, turning over once, until golden brown, about 15 minutes total. ▸Meanwhile, melt butter in a 5- to 6-quart heavy pot over moderate heat, then cook spinach, covered, turning with tongs, until spinach is just wilted, about 2 minutes. Stir in salt and remaining ¼ teaspoon pepper, then serve spinach with chicken.

LEMON CAPER CALAMARI STEAKS WITH BROCCOLINI

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 10 MIN START TO FINISH: 20 MIN

Meaty, sweet squid steaks offer a seafood variation of chicken francese.

- **¼ cup olive oil**
- **3 garlic cloves, crushed in a garlic press**
- **¼ teaspoon dried hot red-pepper flakes**
- **1 lb Broccolini, trimmed**
- **⅓ cup water**
- **¼ teaspoon salt**
- **3 tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- **¼ cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano**
- **¼ teaspoon black pepper**
- **1 large egg**
- **1 tablespoon water**
- **4 frozen calamari steaks (1 lb total; see Kitchen Notebook, page 231), thawed**
- **2 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- **1 to 1½ tablespoons fresh lemon juice**
- **1 tablespoon bottled capers in brine, rinsed and drained**

ACCOMPANIMENT: **lemon wedges**

▸Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a 12-inch heavy skillet over moderate heat until hot but not smoking, then cook garlic and red-pepper flakes, stirring, until golden, about 30 seconds. Add Broccolini and cook, turning with tongs, until coated with oil, then add water and salt and cook, covered, stirring occasionally, until crisp-tender, 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer to a platter with tongs and keep warm, loosely covered with foil. ▸Heat remaining 2 tablespoons oil in a 10-inch heavy skillet over moderately high heat until hot but not smoking. While oil heats, stir together flour, cheese, and pepper in a wide shallow bowl, then lightly beat egg with water in another wide shallow bowl. Dredge 1 calamari steak in flour mixture, shaking off excess, then dip in egg mixture, letting excess drip off, and transfer to a plate. Dredge another steak in flour and dip in egg in same manner, then sauté coated steaks over moderately high heat, turning over once, until golden, about 1½ minutes total. Transfer to platter with Broccolini and keep warm, loosely covered. Dredge, dip, and sauté remaining 2 steaks in same manner, transferring to platter. ▸Pour off fat from skillet, then add butter, lemon juice (to taste), and capers to skillet and cook over moderate heat just until butter melts, about 45 seconds. Pour lemon caper sauce over calamari steaks and serve immediately.

Ten minutes of preparation time for juicy chicken with a breading made from Cheez-It crackers—need we say more?