

Dina's World Famous Lasagna

Ingredients	
1 pound	Lean ground beef <u>or</u> Italian-style sausage, sliced thinly
4 cloves	Garlic, minced
1 can	Tomato sauce
1 can	Diced tomatoes
1 can	Tomato paste
1 small	Zucchini, shredded
1 medium	Carrot, shredded
1 medium	Yellow onion, diced
1/2 pound	Mushrooms, sliced

1 pound	Lasagna noodles
1 pound	Whole milk Ricotta cheese
1 pound	Small curd cottage cheese
3 large	Eggs, beaten
1 1/2 cups	Parmesan cheese, shredded
1 pound	Mozzarella, shredded
1 Tablespoon	Dried basil
1 teaspoon	Dried oregano
1 Tablespoon	Garlic powder
1 teaspoon	Dried parsley

Preheat oven to 375° F.

1. In a large saucepan sauté onion over medium-high heat with a bit of olive oil; once it's softened and a bit translucent, add in mushrooms until they are beginning to brown. Next, add in minced garlic - adding a bit more olive oil if needed - and stir constantly - making sure to avoid burning the garlic! Add the meat, browning, draining and discarding any excess fat.
2. Put salted water on to boil for the lasagna noodles. Once the water has boiled, add the lasagna noodles one at a time, making sure not to break them. Cook at a low boil for 11 minutes. While they are cooking, go on to the next step.
3. Add the tomato products to the meat mixture - diced tomatoes first, deglazing the pan - making sure to loosen up any browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Add in the dried oregano, carrot and zucchini, simmering over medium heat. Allow to simmer, covered, on medium-low heat, while preparing the other components.
4. When the lasagna noodles have cooked, drain off the boiling water and quickly replace it with cold water from the kitchen faucet. Set aside until time to build the layers.
5. In a large mixing bowl, add ricotta cheese, cottage cheese, eggs, parmesan cheese, basil, and parsley. Using a hand mixer, beat on high, making sure to incorporate all of the ingredients thoroughly.
6. In a large, sprayed lasagna pan, place one layer of lasagna noodles. Top with a sprinkling of micro planed parmesan cheese. Top with a layer of ricotta cheese mixture. Top with a layer of meat/tomato sauce. Top with a layer of mozzarella cheese. Repeat the layers until all of the ingredients are used up - saving a bit of mozzarella to sprinkle on the top.
7. Bake at 375° F for 45 to 50 minutes.

Notes:

I like to tent the lasagna with tin foil for the first half of the baking time - this helps build up steam and helps the flavors to meld together nicely - and prevents too much browning on the top.

Substituting the ground beef out for a half ground beef half ground sausage mixture works nicely. And - if you've never tried it - consider using the cooked, sliced, Italian sausage. It's a wonderful alternative!

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