

Grandma's Lasagna

Makes 2 casseroles, each serves 6-8

Ingredients

Bolognese Sauce:

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 large Spanish onion, chopped
4 to 5 garlic cloves, minced
1 1/2 pounds ground beef, pork and veal (1/2 pound each)
2 28 ounce cans whole peeled tomatoes
2 tablespoons tomato paste
5 sprigs each basil and parsley
2 teaspoons dried oregano
1 bay leaf
pinch of sugar
kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Ricotta:

2 pounds fresh ricotta, preferably homemade
2 large eggs, beaten
2 tablespoons each basil and parsley, chopped
1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 1/2 pounds fresh mozzarella
2 pounds lasagna noodles
olive oil
freshly grated Parmesan cheese for topping

Preparation

Begin with the sauce: warm olive oil in a large pot or dutch oven over medium heat, until shimmering. Add chopped onion and cook for a couple of minutes, then add chopped garlic. Cook until vegetables are softened and translucent, about 5 minutes.

Add ground meats to pot and cook, stirring often, until meat is evenly browned.

In a blender, puree two cans of whole peeled tomatoes; slowly stir puree into the meat. Add tomato paste, sprigs of basil and parsley, dried oregano, and the bay leaf to the pot. Season with a pinch of sugar, kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper and stir. Bring sauce to a simmer, turn down heat and cook uncovered, until reduced, for about an hour. Remove the herb sprigs and bay leaf; taste and adjust seasoning if necessary.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

In a large bowl, mix ricotta with 2 eggs, basil, parsley, Parmesan cheese, kosher salt and black pepper. Thickly slice fresh mozzarella and then cut the slices into halves.

Bring a tall pot filled with about 5 quarts of water to a rolling boil. Add a handful of sea salt and then a pound of lasagna noodles. Bring back to boil, adjust to maintain a low boil, and cook until very al dente. Using tongs, place the noodles in a colander to drain. Bring water in pot back up to the boil, add second pound of noodles and cook the same way. Before draining, clear colander by placing the first batch of noodles in a bowl. Drain the second batch by carefully pouring the pot into the colander.

Prepare two 9 x 13 casserole dishes or pans by liberally brushing the bottoms with olive oil. Begin building lasagna by laying down a layer of noodles first. Spread a coating of ricotta mixture over the noodles. Ladle on some of bolognese sauce and top with the mozzarella pieces. Be careful not to use too much sauce--you don't want the lasagna to be soupy. Top with next layer of noodles, ricotta, sauce, cheese, and repeat, building the same way as you go. You should have 4 or 5 layers by the time you reach the top of the casserole. Freshly grate Parmesan cheese over top, then layer lasagna in second pan the same way as the first.

Cover both casseroles with foil and place in the preheated oven. Bake for 30 minutes, turn the pans 180 degrees and remove foil. Continue cooking for another 15 to 20 minutes. When ready, lasagne will be lightly browned and bubbling. Remove from oven and let rest for 10 to 15 minutes before cutting. If you're planning to freeze one, allow it to cool completely. Cover well with plastic wrap and foil before placing in the freezer. Thaw, then reheat in a 375 degree oven for 30 minutes.