



LASAGNA



Ingredients

Olive oil

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound sausage (Italian, breakfast, pork, ground beef or chicken) – optional

2 pounds lean ground beef (or other ground protein) – optional

2 large cans tomato sauce

1 large can stewed tomatoes (or use crushed tomatoes and add onions and peppers)

Salt, pepper, oregano, chili powder, garlic (minced or ground) – all to taste (or use a Spaghetti sauce dry mix)

$\frac{1}{2}$ green pepper, chopped

1 large onion, chopped

1 package of lasagna noodles (see note below)

Cheeses: Grated Cheddar (medium), grated Swiss or Mozzarella, 12 ounces Ricotta (or cottage cheese), grated Parmesan and dry Parmesan. (Quantities depend on the size pan you are making so I try to have a good amount of everything on hand before I start assembly. At least 8 ounces of cheese per kind. At least $\frac{1}{4}$ pound Parmesan.)

Instructions

1. Brown meats and add the tomato sauce, stewed tomatoes, spices, green pepper and onion in a large Dutch Oven pan on the stove. Simmer for 2 hours. Taste and adjust flavors.

2. While sauce is simmering boil noodles per package instructions.
3. In a 3-quart lasagna pan or oven-proof pan/dish with high sides, oil the pan, then layer first a thin layer of the sauce, then a layer of drained noodles, Ricotta, shredded cheeses, sauce, and repeat until the top is sauce. Top with the Parmesan. (I suggest putting your pan on a sheet pan or layering some foil under the pan – if it's pretty full it just might bubble over and I really do not like cleaning my oven – even a self-cleaning oven. I love the smell of fresh food, not burned on the oven.)
4. Bake at 350 degrees F preheated oven until done and bubbling. The cheese needs to be melting and the dish needs to be hot. Approximately an hour. Don't let it burn, but if it gets too brown cover with foil if it isn't done to your satisfaction.
5. Let stand 15-20 minutes to settle. Sprinkle with dry Parmesan if desired.

Cut into squares and serve with some parsley for garnish, a green salad, and hot garlic bread!
YUMMY!!!

CHEF'S NOTES:

Like a lot of my recipes (not all!) you can adjust ingredients to suit your tastes.

You can use a jar or two of prepared pasta sauce. There are many varieties and brands. OR you can use a spaghetti sauce mix in the dry mix aisle of the grocery store instead of your own spices. If you don't use spices a lot, it might be cheaper.

Use your favorite cheeses.

Some lasagna noodles do not need to be boiled before using, use them from the package and they cook in the sauce while baking. Or you can make homemade if you want.

You can certainly use more spice if you want. And I often add dry red wine in the sauce before simmering. It adds flavor, not alcohol.

You can make it without meat which is also good. You might want to add eggplant (not the same as eggplant parmesan).

You might want to add an egg or two to the Ricotta or cottage cheese if they are a little thin when you open the carton.

Make notes on your recipes as you prepare and enjoy them! It's great for your next culinary experience in the kitchen.

This freezes well before baking, and after you bake and enjoy.

Just allow yourself enough time – especially if you are making your own sauce. It takes time, as does all great things!

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