

Yoga Night Spinach and Mushroom Lasagna

Based on the recipe "Weekend Homemade Lasagna with Italian Béchamel Sauce"

By Giada De Laurentis

Lasagna Ingredients:

5 T unsalted butter + 1-2 for sautéing mushrooms + 2T for top of lasagna if desired
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
4 cups whole milk at room temperature
Pinch freshly grated nutmeg
1 1/2 cups tomato sauce (see below)
Salt and White pepper
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 1/2 lb. ricotta cheese
3 large eggs
1lb thick lasagna sheets, cooked al dente
2 packages frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry (or a couple of bags of fresh spinach lightly wilted)
6 oz. crimini mushrooms or mixture of crimini and shitake
2-3 cups grated mozzarella or scamorza cheese
1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan (or mixture of Parmesan and pecorino Romano)

Directions:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees

Béchamel sauce:

In a 2-quart pot, melt 5 T of butter over medium heat. When butter has completely melted, add the flour and whisk until smooth, about 2 minutes. Gradually add the milk, whisking constantly to prevent any lumps from forming. Continue to simmer and whisk over medium heat until the sauce is thick, smooth and creamy. about 10 minutes. The sauce should be thick enough to coat the back of wooden spoon. Remove from heat and add the nutmeg and the tomato sauce. (I don't mix the tomato sauce in but layer it in when I make the lasagna) Set aside and allow to cool completely.

Sauté Mushrooms:

In a sauté pan, heat extra-virgin olive oil and some butter. Add the mushrooms and sauté until they have released their juices and the juices are almost evaporated. Remove from heat and set aside to cool completely.

Ricotta Mixture:

In a medium sized bowl, thoroughly mix the ricotta and eggs. Season with salt and pepper.
Set aside.

Simple Tomato sauce ingredients and directions:

4 T extra-virgin olive oil
1 small onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 stalk celery, chopped
1 carrot, chopped
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 28 oz. cans crushed tomatoes
2 dried bay leaves

In a large pot, heat oil over medium high heat. Add onion and garlic and sauté until soft and translucent, about 5-10 minutes. Add celery and carrots and season with salt and pepper. Sauté until all the vegetables are soft, about 5-10 minutes.

Add tomatoes and bay leaves and simmer uncovered on low heat for 45 min - 1 hour or until thick. Remove bay leaves and check for seasoning. If sauce still tasted acidic, add unsalted butter, 1T at a time to round out the flavors. Add 1/2 the tomato sauce at a time into the bowl of a food processor or blender and process until smooth if a smooth sauce is desired.

If not using all the sauce, allow it to cool completely and pour 1-2 cup portions into freezer plastic bags. It will keep up to 6 months.

Assembly:

In the bottom of 9" x 13" baking dish, spread 1/3 of the béchamel sauce with tomato sauce. . Arrange the pasta sheets side by side, covering the bottom of the baking dish. Evenly spread a layer of the ricotta mixture and then a layer of 1/2 the spinach spreading 1/2 the mushrooms on top. Sprinkle 1/3-1/2 of the mozzarella cheese on top of the mushrooms.

Spread another 1/3 of the béchamel sauce, arranging a layer of pasta and then the balance of the ricotta, spinach and mushrooms with 1/3 -1/2 of the mozzarella. Arrange a final layer of pasta sheets and top with remaining béchamel, mozzarella and Parmesan cheeses. If desired, cut 2T of butter into 1/4" cubes and top lasagna.

Line a large baking sheet with foil. Place lasagna dish on top, cover and put on the middle rack of the oven and bake until top is bubbling, about 30 minutes. Remove cover and continue to back for about 15 minutes.