



Easy Baked Lasagna with Meat Sauce



Photo: Crafter Chef

Easy and simple semi-homemade lasagna made quickly with the help of a few store bought ingredients, like jarred marinara sauce and pre-shredded mozzarella cheese. Assembled in layers of al dente lasagna noodles, hearty meat sauce, and creamy ricotta cheese filling. And topped with whole milk mozzarella cheese and baked until golden brown with crispy edges.

BY ERICA GAMBOA

Categories: Pasta & Main Dish

Servings: 15 | **Difficulty:** Easy

PREP TIME: 20 minutes + **COOK TIME:** 40 minutes - **TOTAL TIME:** 1 hour

Kitchen tools

- 13 x 9 baking dish

- Large pasta pot
- Large skillet
- Baking sheet

Ingredients

- 32 oz. lasagna noodles, either boil or no boil
- 1 lb. ground pork. *Any ground meat will work as well, chicken, turkey, or beef
- 1 lb. ground mild Italian sausage *you can use all 2 lbs. Italian sausage.
- 2 -16 oz. jar Marinara sauce *Reserve 1/3 cup of sauce for lining the baking dish.
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and diced
- 1 medium onion, peeled and diced
- 32 oz. whole ricotta cheese
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. pepper
- 2 tsp. Italian herbs
- 3 cups shredded whole mozzarella cheese

* 1 tbs half & half is optional to loosen the ricotta mixture if it is too tight.

Directions

PREP

- 1 Fill the large pasta pot with water and bring to a boil.
- 2 In the meantime, in a large skillet, sauté the ground meat for 5 minutes, then add onions and garlic and sauté for another 5 minutes.
- 3 Add the jar marinara sauce and simmer for 10 more minutes, remove from heat and set aside.
- 4 Add a good amount of salt to the boiling water
- 5 Add 1 tbsp of vegetable or olive oil to the water and stir
- 6 Add pasta and boil for no more than 8 minutes; the pasta should be underdone.
- 7 Remove the pasta from the water and place the cooked lasagna noodles flat on a baking sheet.
- 8 In a mixing bowl, add ricotta, eggs, parmesan cheese, Italian herbs, salt, and pepper and mix well until creamy and well incorporated. ***Use the half & half to loosen the mixture if it is too tight to spread.**

Assembling the lasagna

- 1 Preheat oven to 375 degrees
- 2 In a 13 x 9 baking dish, add 1/3 cup of reserved sauce.
- 3 Layer the bottom of the baking dish with one even layer of noodles, you may slightly overlap them just to ensure that there are no gaps.
- 4 Add 1/3 of the ricotta mixture to this layer of noodles and spread evenly to cover the noodles.
- 5 Add 1/3 of the meat sauce and spread gently, being careful not to disrupt the layer of ricotta. ***Each layer should keep its integrity.**
- 6 Sprinkle 1 cup of shredded mozzarella to cover the layer of meat sauce.
- 7 Repeat the layers; these layers should repeat at least three times according to these measurements.
- 8 For the last layer, the mozzarella cheese should be sprinkled on top as the last layer.
- 9 Place the lasagna dish on the baking sheet in case there are any drippings or spills.
- 10 Place the lasagna into the oven and bake for 40 minutes. ***Do not cover with foil; the lasagna will cook just perfectly without being covered, and this will also produce the most delicious, brown, crispy edges.**
- 11 Serve immediately or let it stand for a few minutes; the lasagna will be perfectly set directly out of the oven.

Tips:

Boiled or no-boiled pasta?

The most important part of a lasagna are the noodles, of course; they are what make the dish what it is. It's the most unique pasta there is, if you ask me; it's shape and texture are perfect to hold these fillings together. As I mentioned, there are no boil noodles out there now, sheets of dry pasta that are so thin they require no boiling. They do save you on that extra step in the prep process, but that means you'll have to use more sauce and bake the lasagna longer in order for the noodles to cook through. I have found that this sometimes makes the lasagna a bit too saucy and soggy. It does work well as I said, but after making this recipe the other night and going back to the traditional lasagna pasta, I prefer the toothy al' dente bite that this noodle has verses the thin, no-boil pasta. In the end, it all boils down to preference, but this version gives the lasagna that perfect texture and bite. It's hearty and holds up really well to the fillings, absorbing any excess moisture, making this lasagna the easiest to cut into squares and serve immediately without falling apart or needing time to set and rest.

Lasagna makes the best leftovers and is idea for freezing.

Lasagna is probably one of my favorite dishes to have as leftovers. For starters, even with a big family like ours, we always have plenty of leftovers. Usually they don't last long, but if Hailey is in the house, she can eat this every day! But on occasion I have too much left, and I have portioned out individual servings and put each

slice in a meal prep-size container and put it in the freezer for another day. It is a great meal to pull out of the freezer to enjoy a wholesome and delicious dinner on a night when you just can get into the kitchen to cook. Thaw it out completely and microwave or place the leftover lasagna on a baking sheet and bake until heated all the way through.

It is a fantastic idea to make this ahead and freeze the entire baking dish of lasagna as well. Just pull it out of the freezer and thaw completely, bake as directed, and serve when you are ready. This makes a great dish to take to that friend or family member that has been recovering from an illness or a new mom that has just had her baby. It's comforting and delicious, and anyone would absolutely love to have this for dinner when they just can't get dinner on the table.

Nutrition

Nutrition Facts	
Servings: 15	
Amount per serving	
Calories	645
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 45.8g	59%
Saturated Fat 18.5g	92%
Cholesterol 143mg	48%
Sodium 1869mg	81%
Total Carbohydrate 22.3g	8%
Dietary Fiber 2g	7%
Total Sugars 6.5g	
Protein 35.7g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	12%
Calcium 267mg	21%
Iron 2mg	10%
Potassium 251mg	5%

*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a food serving contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calorie a day is used for general nutrition advice.

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