Sausage, Cheese, and Basil Lasagna

Make-ahead · Serves a crowd · Serves 6

Ken's note: TBD

Spicy sausage sauce, a basil-ricotta filling, and plenty of mozzarella. The sauce can be made a day ahead, and no-boil noodles keep it easy.

Ingredients

Sauce

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 lb Italian sausage (sweet; use spicy for more kick), casings removed
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 3 large garlic cloves, chopped
- 2 tsp dried oregano
- ¼ tsp red pepper flakes
- 1 can (28 oz) crushed tomatoes with added puree
- 1 can (14½ oz) diced tomatoes with green pepper and onion, undrained
- Salt and black pepper

Filling

- 1½ cups packed fresh basil leaves
- 1 container (15 oz) plus 1 cup part-skim ricotta
- 1½ cups packed grated mozzarella (about 6 oz)
- ¾ cup grated Parmesan (about 2 oz)
- 1 large egg
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp black pepper

Assembly

- 12 no-boil lasagna noodles (one 8-oz package)
- 3 cups packed grated mozzarella (about 12 oz)
- 1 cup grated Parmesan (about 3 oz)
- Nonstick olive oil spray

Method

1. Heat the oil in a large heavy pot over medium-high heat. Cook the sausage, onion, garlic, oregano, and pepper flakes, mashing the sausage into small pieces, until cooked through, about 10 minutes. Add both cans of tomatoes, bring to a boil, then simmer on medium 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. (Make ahead: chill until cold, cover, and keep up to 1 day.)
2. Chop the basil finely in a food processor with on-off turns. Add the ricotta, mozzarella, Parmesan, egg, salt, and pepper and pulse until just blended and still chunky.
3. Heat the oven to 375°F. Spread 1¼ cups of sauce in a 13×9×2-inch baking dish. Arrange 3 noodles on top, spread with 1½ cups filling, and sprinkle with ¾ cup mozzarella and ¼ cup Parmesan. Repeat the layers (sauce, noodles, filling, cheeses) two more times. Top with the last 3 noodles, the remaining sauce, and the remaining cheeses. Cover with foil sprayed with oil (sprayed side down).
4. Bake 40 minutes. Uncover, raise the oven to 400°F, and bake about 20 minutes more, until the noodles are tender, the sauce bubbles, and the edges are golden. Let stand 15 minutes before cutting.
5. For a simpler sauce, use Marinara (Sauces).