

No-Pasta (Ratatouille) Lasagna

January 13th, 2017

This recipe serves: 6

Prep Time: 02:00

Cook Time: 01:00

This pasta-free dish is full of flavor without all the carbs or gluten of a traditional lasagna. This dish is somewhat similar to the Middle-Eastern dish Moussaka, but without the béchamel. While this dish has a fairly long time-to-table, the flavor is worth the effort.

Ingredients:

The Meat Sauce

- 1 lb Ground Beef
- 2 Tablespoons Butter
- 1 Medium Onion - Diced Finely
- 1 large Carrot - Diced Finely
- 2 large Celery Ribs - Diced Finely
- 1 Can (28 oz) Whole Peeled Tomatoes
- 1/3 Cup Apple Cider Vinegar
- 1 Cup Stock, Broth, or Water
- 8 Cloves (4 Teaspoons) Garlic, finely minced or 1 Teaspoon Garlic Powder
- 1 Green Bell Pepper - Diced finely
- 2 Red Bell Pepper (Pimento) - Oven Roasted and chopped
- 1 Can Tomato Paste
- 2 Teaspoons Sweet Paprika
- 1/4 Teaspoon Chinese Five Spice
- 1 Tablespoon Fresh Rosemary - Finely Chopped

Other Ingredients

- 1 large Italian Eggplant - Sliced into paper thin slices and treated to reduce the bitterness
- 1 large Zucchini Squash - Sliced into paper thin coins
- 1 large Yellow Crookneck Squash - Sliced into paper thin coins
- 3 Roma Tomatoes - Sliced into thin coins
- 8 oz Ricotta / Cottage Cheese
- 8 oz Shredded Mozzarella Cheese
- Fresh Basil Leaves as a garnish

Directions:

Making the Meat Sauce

- Brown the hamburger meat and set it aside for later.
- Set a large (6 quart) Dutch Oven on medium heat.
- Melt butter in the Dutch Oven.
- Add the Onion, Carrot, and the Celery. Continue to stir for several minutes until it begins to brown.
- Reduce the heat and cover. Stir again every few minutes to prevent burning while the vegetables sweat.
- Add the minced Garlic.
- Add the Green Bell peppers.
- Add the Canned Tomatoes and all the juice. Use a potato masher or spatula to mash the tomatoes.
- Add half of the browned Ground Beef.
- Add the Apple Cider Vinegar and Stock. Mix, then cover and simmer for about 15 minutes.
- Remove from the stove and place in a blender. Pulse a few times until everything is blended.

Pour back into the Dutch oven. Mix in the remaining Ground beef, the chopped Pimento, the Tomato Paste, and the chopped Rosemary.

Simmer covered for another 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.

The Lasagna Filling

- Prepare the Eggplant to reduce bitterness
- Heat a large pan to medium high heat
- Pan fry (or if cut thicker, oven roast) the Eggplant until brown on both sides (about 90 seconds per side)

Pan fry (or if cut thicker, oven roast) the Zucchini Squash and the Yellow Crookneck Squash until both sides are browned (also about 90 seconds per side)

If necessary, drain the Eggplant and Squash on paper towels to remove the excess oil

Putting it All Together

Preheat the oven to 450° Fahrenheit.

Cover the bottom of a large (9x12) casserole pan with a thin layer of the Meat Sauce.

Cover the bottom of the pan with sliced Eggplant.

Cover the eggplant with sliced tomatoes.

Spread Ricotta Cheese (or Cottage Cheese).

Spoon on a layer of the Meat Sauce.

Repeat each layer, placing Sliced Tomatoes on top of the last layer of Meat Sauce.

Cover the pan with aluminum foil.

Pay special attention to fill the pan NO MORE THAN 1/4 inch from the top - DO NOT OVERFILL.

Bake for 1 hour.

Remove the foil and cover the top with shredded Mozzarella Cheese.

Set the oven on Broil and broil for 10 minutes, until the cheese bubbles and browns.

Allow to cool for 15 minutes.

Add fresh Basil leaves as a garnish and serve with a sliced Baguette.