

Italian Sausage and San Marzano Tomato Sauce

Ingredients

Italian sausage	1 lb.	San Marzano tomatoes, whole	24 oz. can
Yellow onion, large	1	Tomato paste	3 Tbsp.
Carrots, medium	2	Italian seasoning	2-3 Tbsp.
Garlic cloves	8	Brown sugar	¼ cup
Zucchini, medium	1	Chicken stock	as needed
Mushrooms, sliced	8 oz. can	Lemon juice	3 Tbsp.
Red wine	8 oz.		
Prego chunky garden style sauce	24 oz. jar		

Directions

Dice **onion** — Dice **carrots** fine — Mince **garlic** — Quarter **zucchini** lengthwise and slice into ¼-inch pieces — Drain **mushrooms** — Crush **San Marzano tomatoes** by hand — Open **red wine** to breathe

1. In a large, heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven, brown **Italian sausage** over medium-high heat, breaking into bite-sized pieces. Cook until well-browned and cooked through, about *8-10 minutes*. Remove **sausage** with slotted spoon and set aside, leaving rendered fat in pot.
2. Reduce heat to medium and add diced **onion** to the rendered fat. Cook until translucent and softened, about *5 minutes*.
3. Add diced **carrots** and cook for additional *5 minutes*, stirring occasionally.
4. Add minced **garlic**, sliced **zucchini**, and drained **mushrooms**. Cook for *2-3 minutes* until **garlic** is fragrant.
5. Pour in **red wine** to deglaze, scraping up any browned bits from bottom of pot. Cook until wine reduces by half, about *3-4 minutes*.
6. Stir in **tomato paste** and cook for *1-2 minutes* until it darkens slightly and becomes fragrant.
7. Add **Prego sauce**, hand-crushed **San Marzano tomatoes** with their juices, **Italian seasoning**, and **brown sugar**. Return browned **sausage** to pot and stir to combine.
8. Bring to a gentle simmer, then reduce heat to low. Simmer uncovered for *2 hours*, stirring occasionally and scraping bottom to prevent sticking. Sauce should reduce and concentrate significantly.
9. During final *30 minutes*, add **lemon juice**, and **chicken stock** as needed if sauce becomes too thick. Taste and adjust with additional **brown sugar** or **Italian seasoning** as needed.
10. Serve immediately over pasta or cool completely before storing.

Equipment Required

- Large heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven (6-8 quart capacity)
- Sharp chef's knife and cutting board
- Large wooden spoon or spatula
- Slotted spoon for removing sausage
- Can opener
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Large bowl for crushed tomatoes
- Ladle for serving
- Timer for monitoring cook time

Mise en Place

- Complete all vegetable prep before starting
- Open and crush **San Marzano tomatoes** by hand in bowl
- Have **wine** open and measured
- Pre-measure **Italian seasoning** and **brown sugar**
- Keep **chicken stock** nearby for final adjustments
- Reserve **lemon juice** for finishing

Ingredient Tips

- Use high-quality bulk **Italian sausage** from butcher for best flavor
- San Marzano DOP tomatoes provide superior sweetness and acidity
- Crushing tomatoes by hand creates better texture than machine processing
- Use dry red wine you'd drink - **Merlot**, **Chianti**, or **Côtes du Rhône** work well
- **Italian seasoning** should be basil and thyme heavy with oregano and touch of rosemary
- Fresh **lemon juice** is essential for proper acid balance

Preparation Tips

- Don't skip browning the **sausage** - the fond creates essential flavor base
- Maintain gentle simmer throughout long cook to prevent scorching
- Stir occasionally and scrape bottom to prevent sticking
- Sauce should reduce by about one-third during *2 hour* cook
- Taste and adjust seasoning progressively, not just at end
- Final consistency should coat pasta without being too thick
- Add **lemon juice** off heat to preserve brightness

Make Ahead & Storage

- Sauce improves with overnight rest - flavors meld beautifully
- Refrigerate up to *5 days* or freeze up to *3 months*
- Reheat gently, adding **chicken stock** if needed to restore consistency
- Can double recipe easily for batch cooking
- Freeze in portion-sized containers for quick weeknight meals
- Add fresh **lemon juice** when reheating for brightness

Serving Suggestions

- Serve over **spaghetti**, **rigatoni**, or **penne** pasta
- Reserve pasta water to adjust sauce consistency if needed
- Garnish with fresh **basil**, **Parmesan**, and cracked pepper
- Pairs excellently with garlic bread and Caesar salad
- Makes enough sauce for *1½ pounds* of pasta
- Also excellent as base for lasagna or baked ziti
- Serve with robust red wine like **Chianti** or **Sangiovese**