

Vegetable Lasagna

From the episode: *Vegetarian Pasta Night*

Serves 8 to 10

We prefer the lasagna made with our favorite wholemilk, block-style mozzarella from Sorrento, but Kraft part-skim preshredded mozzarella is also fine. Our preferred brands of crushed tomato are Tuttorosso and Muir Glen.

INGREDIENTS

NO-COOK TOMATO SAUCE

- 1** crushed tomatoes
- 1/4** cup chopped fresh basil
- 2** tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2** garlic cloves , minced
- 1** teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4** teaspoon red pepper flakes

NO-COOK CREAM SAUCE

- 4** ounces Parmesan cheese , grated (2 cups)
- 1** cup cottage cheese
- 1** cup heavy cream
- 2** garlic cloves , minced
- 1** teaspoon cornstarch
- 1/2** teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2** teaspoon pepper

VEGETABLE FILLING

- 1 1/2** pounds eggplant , peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes (about 7 cups)
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper

- 1** pound zucchini , cut into 1/2-inch pieces (about 4 cups)
- 1** pound yellow squash , cut into 1/2-inch pieces (about 4 cups)
- 5** tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 4** garlic cloves , minced
- 1** tablespoon minced fresh thyme
- 12** ounces baby spinach (about 12 cups)

- 12** no-boil lasagna noodles
- 1/2** cup kalamata olives
- 12** ounces low-moisture whole-milk mozzarella cheese , shredded (about 3 cups)
- 2** tablespoons chopped fresh basil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. FOR THE TOMATO SAUCE: Whisk all ingredients together in bowl; set aside.

2. FOR THE CREAM SAUCE: Whisk all ingredients together in bowl; set aside.

3. FOR THE FILLING: Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Toss eggplant with 1 teaspoon salt in large bowl. Line surface of large plate with double layer of coffee filters and lightly spray with vegetable oil spray. Spread eggplant in even layer over filters. Wipe out and reserve now-empty bowl. Microwave eggplant, uncovered, until dry to touch and slightly shriveled, about 10 minutes, tossing once halfway through to ensure that eggplant cooks evenly. Let cool slightly. Return eggplant to bowl and toss with zucchini and squash.

4. Combine 1 tablespoon oil, garlic, and thyme in small bowl. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add half eggplant mixture, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper; cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are lightly browned, about 7 minutes. Push vegetables to sides of skillet; add half of garlic mixture to clearing and cook, mashing with spatula, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir to combine garlic mixture with vegetables and transfer to medium bowl. Repeat with remaining

eggplant mixture, 2 tablespoons oil, and remaining garlic mixture.

5. Return skillet to medium-high heat, add remaining teaspoon oil, and heat until shimmering. Add spinach and cook, stirring frequently, until wilted, about 3 minutes. Transfer spinach to paper towel-lined plate and drain 2 minutes. Stir into eggplant mixture.

6. TO ASSEMBLE: Spray 13 by 9-inch baking dish with vegetable oil spray. Spread 1 cup tomato sauce in bottom of baking dish; shingle 4 noodles on top of sauce. Spread half of vegetable mixture over noodles, followed by half of olives, half of cream sauce, and 1 cup of mozzarella. Repeat layering with 4 noodles, 1 cup tomato sauce, remaining vegetables, remaining olives, remaining cream sauce, and 1 cup mozzarella. Place remaining 4 noodles on top layer of cheese. Spread remaining 1 cup tomato sauce over noodles and sprinkle with remaining 1 cup mozzarella. Lightly spray large sheet of aluminum foil with vegetable oil spray and cover lasagna. Bake until -bubbling, about 35 minutes. Cool on wire rack 25 minutes. Cut into pieces, sprinkle with basil, and serve.

TECHNIQUE

KEYS TO HEARTY, FULL-FLAVORED VEGETABLE LASAGNA

GO FOR CREAMIER CHEESE Cottage cheese boasts not only a creamier consistency than drier, more pebbly ricotta but also tangier flavor.



ADD RICH, NO-COOK CREAM SAUCE Instead of a traditional cooked béchamel, we whisk together a quick version made with heavy cream, Parmesan, the cottage cheese, and garlic, which we add directly to the casserole.



ADD BRIGHT, NO-COOK TOMATO SAUCE Simply stirring together crushed tomatoes, basil, garlic, and olive oil guarantees a sauce with bright flavor—and saves time at the stove, too.



PUT A STOP TO OILY EGGPLANT Salting, then microwaving the cubes of eggplant for 10 minutes eliminates moisture that would flood the lasagna and collapses its air pockets so it soaks up less oil.



"DEHYDRATE" AND BROWN VEGGIES We toss the microwaved eggplant into a hot skillet with the squashes to rid them of water and develop flavorful browning. (Sautéing the spinach also helps rid it of moisture.)



INFUSE VEGGIES WITH FLAVORFUL OIL A shot of garlic-thyme oil stirred in with the sautéed eggplant, summer squash, and zucchini near the end of cooking adds depth.



TECHNIQUE

WHAT AILS VEGETABLE LASAGNA

The classic trio of eggplant, zucchini, and summer squash is typically rife with issues like washed out flavor, soggy vegetables, dry cheese, and dull red sauce.



TECHNIQUE

SHRINKING EGGPLANT DOWN TO SIZE

Eggplant is full of water that will wash out the flavors of lasagna as it bakes in the oven. It's also riddled with air pockets that act as a magnet for oil. Salting the cubed fruit then microwaving it solves both problems: Microwaving not only speeds up salt's ability to pull moisture out of the eggplant but also collapses the eggplant's air pockets. (We set the eggplant on a double layer of coffee filters to absorb the excess moisture as it is released.) The result: Low moisture, meaty-tasting, eggplant that doesn't soak up too much oil when sauteed.

RAW



SALTED + MICROWAVED



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