



Meatless “Meat” Sauce with Chickpeas and Mushrooms

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

To create a vegetarian version of a savory, unctuous tomato-meat sauce, we started with cremini mushrooms and tomato paste—both rich sources of savory flavor. Extra-virgin olive oil did double duty, enriching the sauce and helping toast the classic Italian aromatics: garlic, dried oregano, and red pepper flakes. We bulked up the sauce with chopped chickpeas that had been rinsed of their excess starch. To thin the sauce without watering down its flavor, we added vegetable broth.

INGREDIENTS

- 10 ounces cremini mushrooms, trimmed
- 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon table salt
- 1 onion, chopped
- 5 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 ¼ teaspoons dried oregano

INSTRUCTIONS

Make sure to rinse the chickpeas after pulsing them in the food processor or the sauce will be too thick. Our favorite canned chickpeas are from Pastene, our favorite crushed tomatoes are from SMT, and our favorite tomato paste is from Goya.

1. Pulse mushrooms in two batches in food processor until chopped into 1/8- to 1/4-inch pieces, 7 to 10 pulses, scraping down sides of bowl as needed. (Do not clean workbowl.)

**SERVES 8 TO 12
(MAKES 6 CUPS,
ENOUGH FOR 2 LBS
PASTA)**

- ¼** teaspoon red pepper flakes
- ¼** cup tomato paste
- 1** (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- 2** cups vegetable broth
- 1** (15 ounce) can chickpeas, rinsed
- 2** tablespoons chopped fresh basil

2. Heat 5 tablespoons oil in Dutch oven over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add mushrooms and 1 teaspoon salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until mushrooms are browned and fond has formed on bottom of pot, about 8 minutes.

3. While mushrooms cook, pulse onion in food processor until finely chopped, 7 to 10 pulses, scraping down sides of bowl as needed. (Do not clean workbowl.) Transfer onion to pot with mushrooms and cook, stirring occasionally, until onion is soft and translucent, about 5 minutes. Combine remaining 1 tablespoon oil, garlic, oregano, and pepper flakes in bowl.

4. Add tomato paste to pot and cook, stirring constantly, until mixture is rust-colored, 1 to 2 minutes. Reduce heat to medium and push vegetables to sides of pot. Add garlic mixture to center and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in tomatoes and broth; bring to simmer over high heat. Reduce heat to low and simmer sauce for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

5. While sauce simmers, pulse chickpeas in food processor until chopped into 1/4-inch pieces, 7 to 10 pulses. Transfer chickpeas to fine-mesh strainer and rinse under cold running water until water runs clear; drain well. Add chickpeas to pot and simmer until sauce is slightly thickened, about 15 minutes. Stir in basil and season with salt and pepper to taste. (Sauce can be refrigerated for up to 2 days or frozen for up to 1 month.)