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# Polenta Lasagna with Smoky Red Pepper Sauce

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Author: [Sylvia Fountaine](#) Prep Time: 45 Cook Time: 45

Total Time: 1 hour 30 minutes Yield: 8 Category: main, vegetarian, vegan adaptable Method: baked  
Cuisine: italian

## Description

*Vegetarian Polenta Lasagna with Roasted Red Pepper Sauce – an easy gluten-free lasagna recipe with the option to use store-bought polenta from a tube. If making polenta from scratch, **allow 8 hours** of refrigeration time (or make the day before) Vegan Adaptable or add Italian sausage for extra heartiness. Updated 10/19*

## Ingredients

2 x 18-ounce [tubes of polenta](#) (store-bought). **OR See notes for making your own!**

6 ounces of Ricotta ( or sub this [vegan tofu ricotta](#) ) about 1-1 1/2 cups.

1–2 cups grated mozzarella cheese ( or use smoked mozzarella for great flavor, jack, or use melty **vegan cheese**)

Generous pinch [salt](#), pepper and [nutmeg](#)

## Spinach Mushroom Filling:

2 tablespoons [olive oil](#)

one onion, diced

4–6 garlic cloves, rough chopped  
10–16 ounces mushrooms (sliced)  
½ teaspoon [salt](#)  
1/2 teaspoon pepper  
1 teaspoon [Italian seasoning](#) ( or use 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary or thyme)  
2 heaping handfuls baby spinach, chopped ( or 8 ounces frozen)

Smoky Red Pepper Sauce ( or use 2 cups store-bought marinara)

1 roasted red pepper (out of a jar is OK) about 1/2 cup – 3/4 cup total  
1 x 14 ounce can diced tomatoes and their juices  
2 tablespoons [olive oil](#)  
1 teaspoon [smoked paprika](#)  
1 teaspoon [cumin](#)  
1 teaspoon [Italian seasoning](#)  
1/2 teaspoon [salt](#) and pepper  
1 teaspoon [sugar](#)

Quick pesto drizzle:

1 cup packed basil ( or Italian parsley)  
1–2 teaspoons lemon zest  
½ cup [olive oil](#)  
1 fat garlic clove  
[salt](#) and pepper to taste

Homemade Firm Polenta (requires 6-8 hours of refrigeration time)

8 cups water  
2 teaspoon [salt](#)  
2 teaspoons [granulated garlic](#) powder  
1 teaspoon [Italian seasoning](#)  
2 cups cornmeal  
[olive oil](#) for coating [sheet pan](#)

## Instructions

If making with homemade Polenta- [make this first](#) and let cool 6-8 hours in the fridge to set up. ( You could make this ahead, along with the sauce, filling and pesto drizzle.)

Preheat oven to 400F (prep and assembly will take around 45 minutes- *with store-bought* polenta)

**Make filling:** Heat 1-2 tablespoon [olive oil](#) in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Saute the onion, stirring until tender, about 5 minutes, add garlic and cook 2 more minutes. Turn skillet to medium ( or medium-low) and add the mushrooms and add [salt](#) pepper and [Italian seasoning](#), and saute until the mushrooms release their liquid and this evaporates, about 10 minutes. Add the chopped spinach and wilt and mix to combine, adding a splash of water if needed. Cook-off any liquid. Adjust [salt](#) to your taste.

**While the filling is cooking, make the Smoky Red Pepper sauce:** Add the diced tomatoes (and juices) to the blender and add the drained roasted pepper. Add 2 tablespoons olive oil, salt, pepper, smoked paprika, cumin and Italian herbs. Blend until creamy and smooth. If the sauce is too thick to get motor running, add a little water (a tablespoon at a time) just to get it going. Taste. It should have a sweet smoky flavor.

**Prep the two [tubes of polenta](#) if using store-bought.** (Remember to taste it) It's easiest to cut the tube in half. Then in quarters, so each quarter yields 3 equal slices. So 12 slices each from each tube about 3/4 inch thick.

**Assemble:** Spray a 9×13 inch [baking dish](#) with [olive oil](#). Place 1/2-2/3 cup sauce on the bottom, coating bottom evenly. Add the first layer of polenta. Top with all the filling, spreading it out evenly. Dot with spoonfuls of ricotta. *Sprinkle lightly with [salt](#), pepper and [nutmeg](#).* Top with shredded cheese. Pour 1/2 cup sauce lightly over the cheese. Then top with final layer of polenta. Pour sauce over top (you may not need all) and using a [spatula](#) , evenly coat the polenta evenly. **Save the remaining sauce for touching up after** your remove the foil. You could do this all ahead and refrigerate for 24 hours.

At this point, you could add more cheese to the top, or keep it a little leaner, up to you. Cover tightly with foil and bake 20 minutes. Remove foil and bake uncovered for 15-20 more minutes until bubbling and warmed through. If you want it “saucy”, add more sauce.

While it’s baking **make the Pesto Drizzle**. To make the pesto drizzle, simply place ingredients in a [food processor](#) and pulse until combined.

When the polenta lasagna is finished cooking you could drizzle it lightly with the pesto or serve it on the side.

Enjoy!

## Notes

- <sup>i</sup> **Keep in mind, not all store-bought polenta tastes the same.** The Trader Joe’s brand is very flavorful. Your best bet is to cut a tiny piece off the end and taste it. If it tastes bland, you will need to bump up the flavor and [salt](#) in the filling and sauce. Things like garlic powder, onion powder and herbs help, and most importantly [salt](#). The pesto drizzle will help a lot too.

## TO MAKE YOUR OWN FIRM POLENTA:

Bring 8 cups water to a boil in a [medium pot](#). Add 2 teaspoons [salt](#), 2<sup>1</sup> teaspoons garlic powder ( or onion powder) and 1 Tablespoon fresh chopped herbs (rosemary, thyme, or sage) Or sub 1 teaspoon dried rosemary, thyme, Italian herbs or herbs de Provence. When water is boiling, very slowly pour and whisk in 2 cups cornmeal, whisking out any clumps.

Cover, turn heat to low and cook 20 minutes, stirring once at 10 minutes.

<sup>2</sup> Grease an edged [sheet pan](#) with [olive oil](#) really well. Grease a flat [metal](#)  
<sup>3</sup> [spatula](#) really well. Pour out the polenta so it's  $\frac{3}{4}$  thick – noting, you will not need to use the whole sheet pan, so start on one end, spreading it out the the sides. See photos.

If the polenta sticks to the [spatula](#), just pour a little [olive oil](#) over the  
<sup>4</sup> polenta, coating the [spatula](#) with it. Flatten it out to an even thickness. I usually cover about half of a large [sheet pan](#) (leaving half of the [sheet pan](#) bare- because if you stretch it to fill the whole pan, polenta will be too thin).

Let cool, then refrigerate until very firm, about 6-8 hours, or overnight (or  
<sup>5</sup> up to 3 days).

Cut into 16, 4-inch squares. (If you end up with some smaller scraps, I  
<sup>6</sup> usually just tuck these in the lasagna in the first, base layer, underneath so they don't show, leaving the prettier cuts for the top layer.)

# Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 ½ pieces - With the basil pesto  
Serves 8

## Amount Per Serving

**Calories** 424

% Daily Value\*

**Total Fat** 26g **33%**

Saturated Fat 7.8g

Polyunsaturated Fat 2.6g

Monounsaturated Fat 14.1g **0%**

**Cholesterol** 32.5mg **11%**

**Sodium** 470.2mg **20%**

**Total Carbohydrate** 36.7g **13%**

Dietary Fiber 5.6g **20%**

Sugars 6.5g

**Protein** 13.8g **28%**

Vitamin A 24% Vitamin C 64%

Calcium 17% Iron 14%

Vitamin D 3% Magnesium 17%

Potassium 108% Zinc 19%

*Keywords: polenta lasagna, polenta lasagna recipes, polenta recipes, polenta recipe baked, polenta recipe vegan, baked polenta, vegan polenta, polenta tube recipes*



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