

CLAIRE'S RECIPE: DIRECTIONS FOR MAKING LASAGNA:

The secret to cooking a great lasagna is this: the better the ingredients, the better the dish. This lasagna will serve 8 to 10 people. This dish feels complete served with a green salad and crusty bread. If you invite your teenage grandchildren with enormous appetites, you can bake a few pounds of Italian sausage as a side dish. Make with love.

What you need to successfully make this dish:

A large (9" x 13") baking or lasagna pan

A large pot for cooking noodles

A Dutch oven or large pan with a cover

A large bowl for the ricotta mixture

Foil

2 onions—finely chopped

3 large gloves of garlic—finely minced

Two large cans of whole tomatoes

One small can of tomato paste

4 medium eggs: In a cup, stir up raw eggs until mixture is a uniform yellow

Fresh parsley— $\frac{1}{2}$ cup, finely chopped

Fresh basil— $\frac{1}{2}$ cup, finely chopped

Nutmeg—1 ground teaspoon or 10 grinds

Italian seasoning (dried)—2 teaspoons for sauce

Pepper—1 teaspoon or 5 grinds

Red pepper flakes, if you like a spicier sauce—1 teaspoon

Salt—2 teaspoons (1 teaspoon for sauce & 1 for ricotta mixture)

Sugar—1 tablespoon for sauce

1 box lasagna noodles

Ricotta—2 pounds

Mozzarella—2 pounds, sliced into ¼-in. slices

Parmesan—8 ounces

Olive oil—2 ounces (¼-cup), plus a few tablespoons

1 cup water or red wine

Optional: Spinach—1 box of defrosted frozen chopped spinach, which you can chop finer if desired

- *Preheat the oven to 375 F (190 C).*

1. If you plan to include spinach in the ricotta mixture, then set out the frozen chopped spinach to defrost. Each of these ingredients can be put on small, separate plates. Mince the garlic, chop onions, basil, and parsley. Open the cans of tomatoes and tomato paste. In a large pan, heat ¼ cup of olive oil to a medium temperature. Cook the onion and garlic over medium heat until well-browned, golden in color, but not burnt. Stir in crushed tomatoes, tomato paste, and water or red wine. Season with sugar, Italian seasoning, 1 teaspoon of salt, pepper, and 2 to 3 tablespoons parsley. If you like your sauce spicier, add a teaspoon of crushed red pepper. Simmer your sauce in the now covered pan for about an hour. Stir the sauce occasionally and, if needed, thin with wine or water. The sauce

Should be thin enough to easily fill a large spoon—just slightly thicker than soup.

2. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Cook lasagna noodles in boiling water for 12 to 15 minutes. The noodle should be cooked but still quite firm. Drain noodles, and rinse with cold water. Set aside.

3. In a mixing bowl, combine ricotta cheese with eggs, remaining parsley, 2 tablespoons of fresh basil, ground nutmeg and teaspoon salt. Mix thoroughly with a large spoon or your hands. If you like the color green, you can add chopped spinach or more chopped parsley for color and flavor. Mix and set aside.

4. To assemble, oil the bottom of a 9 x 13" pan, and spread 1-1/2 cups of red sauce in the bottom of the dish. Arrange 4 or 5 noodles lengthwise over sauce. Spread with half the ricotta cheese mixture. Top with a third of mozzarella cheese slices. Spoon 1-1/2 cups tomato sauce over mozzarella, and sprinkle with 1/4-cup Parmesan cheese. Put down another 3 or 4 noodles. Add another layer of tomato sauce, ricotta, mozzarella and Parmesan as above. Then top with remaining noodles, sauce, and cheese. Sprinkle with the rest of the chopped fresh basil and parsley. Cover with foil. (To prevent sticking, either spray foil with cooking spray, or make sure the foil does not touch the cheese.)

5. Bake in preheated oven (375 F) for 30 minutes. You can spend this time cleaning up the big mess you have made of your kitchen. Remove foil and bake an additional 30 minutes. Time for a short rest. I am referring to you. The sauce and the cheese should now be bubbling and hot. Take the lasagna out of the oven. Cover the lasagna again with foil. Cover the entire dish with a clean towel. Let it rest. This time I am referring to the lasagna. Let the lasagna settle for 30 minutes before serving.