

Veggie Loaded Meat Sauce with Spaghetti Squash

I absolutely love this recipe! The options are pretty much endless so I will try to keep this concise.

We chose to use spaghetti squash as our “noodles”. With the quarantine, we haven’t been quite as active as usual so I was looking for a way to slightly reduce the calories of this meal without sacrificing volume! Jeff and I are both “volume eaters”, meaning we like to eat large meals. We are always looking for ways to “bulk up” a meal without adding too many extra heavy calories. Spaghetti squash is great, or try spiralized zucchini, spiralized sweet potatoes or spiralized butternut squash (you can make these or buy them pre-spiralized).

Recipe:

Makes approx. 6 servings

Ingredients:

2 large spaghetti squash, cut in half

Approx 1 lb lean ground meat (pork, beef, pork/beef blend, turkey, chicken etc.), thawed

2-3 cloves garlic, minced fine

1 medium cooking onion, chopped small

2-3 bell peppers (any colours), centre and seeds removed, chopped into ¼ inch pieces

2-3 cups white mushrooms, sliced

2 cups baby spinach (optional)

1.5 jars pasta sauce (we love Classico Tomato & Basil)

1 tbsp Italian seasoning

2 bay leaves

Salt and Pepper to taste



Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 375F. Line a baking sheet with tin foil and spray with non-stick cooking spray. Place spaghetti squash with fleshy side down, skin side up. Roast in pre-heated oven for 1 hour.



2. Meanwhile, in a large pan with high sides, cook ground meat at medium/high temperature. Break apart the meat as it cooks. Add in garlic and cloves, mix into the meat. Cook until the meat is no longer pink, approx. 8 minutes.



3. Remove the meat from the heat. Place a colander on top of a rimmed plate. Pour the contents of the meat mixture into the colander to allow the fat to drain out onto the plate (if using chicken or turkey I still recommend this step to eliminate access water). When the fat has cooled, pour the fat into a jar/container and dispose. Never pour animal fats down the sink. Leave the meat mixture off to the side.

4. In the same large pan, add the bell peppers, mushrooms and baby spinach over medium heat. Cook for approx. 3-5 minutes until veggies have softened.



5. Add the meat mixture, pasta sauce, Italian seasoning, desired amount of salt (I recommend 1 tsp) and a few turns of ground pepper. Mix together thoroughly (if you like olives I would recommend you add them at this step!). Lower heat to low/medium and bring the mixture to a simmer.
6. Add bay leaves. Reduce to low heat. Cover and simmer the sauce for 30 minutes.



7. When the squash is cooked it should easily be pierced with a fork. Turn the squash fleshy side up with an oven mitten to allow to cool for 5 minutes.



8. Using a fork, carefully scrape out the squash and transfer the desired amount to a plate or bowl.
9. Once the sauce has simmered for 30 minutes, remove the lid and give it a good stir. Remove the bay leaves. Serve the sauce on top of the squash – add parmesan cheese if desired.
10. Enjoy with your puppy staring at you with hopeful eyes...

