

Veggie Loaded Lasagna aka Eggplant Parmesan

I learned to make this recipe when I travelled through Italy...

I have simplified it over the years as there are many additional steps but I never found them crucial. If you've never given eggplant a try or you have in the past but didn't care for it, now is your chance to give it another go. It is generally a low-cost item that is easy to work with and during this time of more sedentary behaviour it acts as a replacement for noodles. I love this recipe for leftovers – I think it's better the second day... if it lasts that long!

Recipe:

Makes 4-6 servings

Ingredients:

- 1.5-2 medium eggplants, sliced into medallions (about ¼ inch thickness)
- 1-2 zucchini, sliced long
- Canola or Olive oil cooking spray (or regular cooking oil)
- 1.5lbs lean ground beef (pork is ok)
- 1 medium cooking onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 jar of pasta sauce (I used Classico Portobello Mushroom)
- ½ tsp each of garlic powder and onion powder
- 1 tsp each of Italian herbs and dried oregano
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/3 cup parmesan cheese
- ½ cup skim mozzarella

Instructions:

1. Pre-heat oven to high broil. Line 2 baking sheets with tin foil and line with non-stick cooking spray. Spread eggplant rounds onto the baking sheets (they can be touching if needed). Spray the tops with cooking spray OR drizzle with olive oil or vegetable oil.



2. Place 1 tray on the top rack of the oven. Broil for 5-8 minutes. Keep a close eye on them. Most pieces should be golden brown. Remove from the oven and flip. Return for another 5 minutes. Repeat with the other baking sheet(s).



3. Meanwhile, in a deep pan, begin cooking ground beef with garlic and onions over medium temperature. Stirring every few minutes. Cook until beef is no longer pink, about 8-10 minutes.



4. 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. When the fat has cooled, pour the fat into a jar/container and dispose. Never pour animal fats down the sink.
5. Return meat mixture back into pan and add pasta sauce, herbs, salt and pepper to taste. Turn heat to low and bring to a low simmer. Simmer for at least 10 minutes, preferably 30 minutes.



6. Spray a lasagna pan with non-stick cooking spray.
 - a. Spread a small amount of the meat mixture on the bottom of the pan.
 - b. Make a layer using the roasted eggplant and the raw zucchini.
 - c. Pour half the meat mixture on top of the vegetables.
 - d. Sprinkle parmesan on top of the sauce.
 - e. Repeat b-d.
 - f. Sprinkle mozzarella on top.



End of layer #1



Before the oven

7. Bake in the oven at 350 degrees for 35 minutes. Slice into “pieces” with a sharp knife. Serves great with a fresh summer salad.

