

Sausage Lasagna

- 2 small yellow onions, roughly chopped
 - 6 garlic cloves, roughly chopped
 - 2 small carrots, roughly chopped 1 stalk celery, roughly chopped
 - 3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
 - 1-1/2 pounds sweet Italian sausage (in bulk, or removed from casing)
 - 3/4 cup red wine
 - 1 (28 oz.) can crushed tomatoes
 - 1/2 cup heavy cream
 - 3/4 teaspoon salt
 - 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
 - 2 teaspoons sugar
 - 1-1/4 teaspoons dried thyme
 - 2 bay leaves
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- 1 (15 oz.) container whole milk ricotta (about 1-3/4 cups)
 - 3 oz. cream cheese
 - 1 large egg
 - 1 garlic clove, roughly chopped
 - 3/4 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
 - 3/4 teaspoon salt
 - 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
 - 1/2 cup fresh roughly chopped basil
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- 12 oven ready (no boil) lasagna noodles (such as Barilla)
 - 1 pound shredded whole milk mozzarella cheese
 - 1/4 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano



For the Sausage Bolognese

1. Place the onions, garlic, carrot and celery in the bowl of a food processor fitted with the metal blade; pulse until finely minced but not puréed.
2. Heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Crumble the sausage into the pan and cook, stirring occasionally and breaking the sausage into small pieces, until slightly browned but not all the way cooked through, about 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the partially cooked sausage to a plate. Set aside.
3. Add the remaining tablespoon olive oil to the pan, reduce the heat to medium, and add the minced vegetables. Cook, stirring frequently, until the vegetables are very soft, 7-8 minutes. Do not brown; reduce the heat if necessary.
4. Add the wine; continue cooking, stirring to scrape any brown bits from the bottom of the pan, until the wine is mostly absorbed by the vegetables, a few minutes.
5. Add the crushed tomatoes, cream, salt, pepper, sugar, thyme and bay leaves and bring to a boil. (Don't worry that the sauce looks a rosy color; it will darken as it cooks.) Reduce the heat and simmer until the sauce is thickened, about 20 minutes.

6. Meanwhile, using your hands, break the sausage up into smaller pieces (big chunks don't work well with lasagna).
7. Add the sausage back to the pan along with all the juices and continue simmering until the sausage is fully cooked and the flavors all meld together, about 10 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary. Fish out the bay leaves and discard.
8. Combine the ricotta, cream cheese, egg, garlic, Parmigiano-Reggiano, salt and pepper in the bowl of a food processor fitted with a metal blade. Process until evenly combined. Add the basil and pulse until finely chopped.
9. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Spray a 13x9x2-inch baking dish with nonstick cooking spray.
10. Spread about 1-1/2 cups sauce in the bottom of the baking dish. Arrange 3 noodles over the sauce. Dollop 1/3 of the ricotta filling over the noodles, then spread evenly to cover. Sprinkle with 3/4 cup mozzarella cheese. Repeat layering of sauce, noodles, ricotta filling and mozzarella 2 more times. Top with the remaining 3 noodles. Spoon the remaining sauce atop the noodles, then sprinkle with the remaining mozzarella and 1/4 cup Parmigiano-Reggiano.
11. Spray a large piece of foil with nonstick cooking spray. Cover the lasagna tightly with the foil, sprayed side down. Bake for 40 minutes. Carefully uncover and increase the oven temperature to 400°F. Bake, uncovered, until the noodles are tender, the sauce is bubbling, and the edges are golden and puffed, about 20 minutes. Remove from the oven and let stand for 15-20 minutes before serving.