

# Carolyn's Meat Lasagna

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Cooking With Carolyn

**Note:** For best results, prepare the Chunky Marinara Sauce the day before making this Lasagna. If you choose not to make the Chunky Marinara Sauce recipe below you will need about 12 cups of your favorite store bought pasta sauce.

## Ingredients

Yield: 8 to 10 Servings

### Chunky Marinara Sauce

- 1/3 Cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1¼ Cup Onion, diced
- ¾ Cup Celery, diced
- ¾ Cup Green Bell Pepper, diced
- ¾ Cup Red Bell Pepper, diced
- ¾ Cup Crimini Mushrooms, diced
- ¾ Cup Zucchini, diced
- ¾ Cup Carrot, grated
- 5 Cloves Garlic, minced
- 1 Tablespoon Kosher Salt
- ½ Tablespoon Black Pepper
- To Taste Grand Diamond All Purpose Seasoning
- 1 Teaspoon Red Pepper Flakes (optional)
- 2 Teaspoons Dried Thyme
- 2 Teaspoons Dried Oregano or 1½ Teaspoons Dried Mexican Oregano
- 6 Tablespoons Tomato Paste
- 1- 28 oz. can Whole Tomatoes
- 1- 14 oz. can Whole Tomatoes
- 1- 29 oz. can Tomato Sauce
- 1- 14 oz. can Tomato Sauce
- 2 Cups Low Sodium Chicken Stock/Broth or Vegetable Broth
- 2 Teaspoons Honey
- 2 Tablespoons Italian Parsley, finely chopped
- 2 Tablespoons Fresh Basil, finely chopped

### Lasagna Ingredients

- 3 Tablespoons Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 2½ Pounds of Italian Sausage, remove the casings, Hot or Sweet; Chicken, Turkey or Pork,
- ½ Pound Ground Turkey
- 12 Cups Chunky Marinara Sauce **OR** Your Favorite thick Pasta Sauce

- 3½ Cups (1- 30 Ounce Container) Ricotta Cheese, Whole Milk or Part Skim
- 1 Extra Large Egg
- 4 Tablespoons Fresh Italian Parsley
- 4 Tablespoons Fresh Basil
- To Taste Kosher Salt
- To Taste Black Pepper
- 1½ Boxes Dried Lasagna Pasta
- 1 Cup Fresh Grated Parmesan Cheese
- 3½ Cups Shredded Mozzarella Cheese

## Directions

### Chunky Marinara Sauce:

Place a large stock pot over medium-high heat. Pour in the olive oil and allow it to heat up for 2 to 3 minutes. Add all of the vegetables into the pot EXCEPT the garlic. Sauté the vegetables for 10 minutes making sure all of the vegetables are coated with the oil and are able to become slightly softened. Stir in the garlic and cook for another 5 minutes. Sprinkle in the salt, black pepper, GDS, red pepper, thyme, and oregano. Stir. Add the tomato paste, whole tomatoes, tomato sauce, chicken stock and honey. Stir to combine. Bring the sauce to a boil, and then reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer for 1½ hours occasionally stirring the sauce and breaking up the whole tomatoes during the cooking process. Once down, stir in the parsley and basil.

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### Lasagna:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F

**Step 1-** Reheat the Chunky Marinara Sauce (or other thick pasta sauce of your choice) in large pot for about 20 to 30 minutes. Turn off the heat.

**Step 2-** Place a large skillet over medium-high heat and pour in the olive oil. Allow the oil to heat up for about 2 to 3 minutes. Add all of the Italian sausage and the ground turkey to the skillet and brown the meat for 10 to 15 minutes or until fully cooked. Drain any excess fat from the skillet if necessary. Turn off the heat.

**Step 3-** Add 8 cups of the marinara sauce to the meat and stir until combined. Set aside. (**Note:** If you're using a store bought sauce, add 6 cups and stir in more if needed. You don't want the meat sauce to be runny. ) (**Note:** The leftover sauce is intended to be used the next day. Lasagna tends to soak up a lot of the sauce once it's refrigerated. So, pour a little sauce over the top before reheating a piece the next day.)

**Step 4-** In a medium sized bowl, combine and whisk the ricotta cheese, 2 Tablespoons of each of the basil and parsley, and add salt and pepper to taste. Taste it. Then add the egg and whisk just until combined. Set aside.

**Step 5-** Place a large stock pot of water, about 4 to 5 quarts, over high heat and allow it to come up to a rapid boil then salt the water with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of salt.

**Step 6-** Add the lasagna pasta to the boiling water and cook for only 5 minutes. Don't over crowd the pot, you may have to cook the pasta in a couple of batches. Once done, carefully remove the pasta from the water using tongs. Once done, coat the pasta with a thin layer of extra virgin olive oil to prevent it from sticking. Set aside.

Using a 9 x 13 x 2 baking dish, pour 1 cup of the meat sauce onto the bottom of the dish and spread it out. (**Tip:** Alternating the direction in which the pasta is laid will help build a "stand up" lasagna that won't slide across the plate.)

**Start layering:**

**1st Layer:** Lay the lasagna pasta lengthwise going from **LEFT TO RIGHT**, the pasta may overlap a little to fit the baking dish. Spread each of the layers evenly. Spread  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of the ricotta cheese mixture, followed by  $2\frac{1}{4}$  to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cups of meat sauce, then  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of parmesan cheese, and top with  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of mozzarella cheese.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Layer:** Lay the lasagna pasta going from **TOP TO BOTTOM**. Cut the pasta so it will fit the dish. Proceed with the layers and proper measurements,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup ricotta cheese,  $2\frac{1}{4}$  to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cups of meat sauce,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of parmesan cheese and top with  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of mozzarella cheese.

There should be 4 layers in total, however the 3<sup>rd</sup> layer of pasta should be laying from **LEFT TO RIGHT** and the 4<sup>th</sup> layer should be laid from **TOP TO BOTTOM**.

Sprinkle the remaining fresh parsley and basil on top of the lasagna. Place the dish on a cookie sheet lined with foil. Tent and cover the dish with aluminum foil being care not to allow the foil to touch the cheese. Bake covered at 375 degrees for 30 minutes and then remove the cover and continue to bake for an additional 15 to 20 minutes or until the cheese is completely melted and the sides are slightly bubbling. Once done, let the lasagna rest for about 15 to 20 minutes before cutting into portions.