

Baked Ziti Buongustaio

For the Ragu:

3 28-ounce cans of peeled tomatoes

½ cup virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons olive or vegetable oil

2 red onions, chopped fine

4 cloves garlic, minced

1 small shredded carrot

½ teaspoon peperoncino

1 pound Italian sausage meat or ground pork

1 pound ground chuck

Any or all of these: parsley, fresh thyme and rosemary, ½ teaspoon fennel seed, fresh basil

1 teaspoon of sugar, if necessary

Salt and black pepper to taste

In a large kettle, heat the 2 tablespoons of olive or vegetable oil over medium heat, and fry both the sausage meat and the ground chuck until they lose their color. Remove the meat from the kettle, as well as any liquid that has accumulated.

In the same kettle, sauté the onion, a handful of minced parsley, the shredded carrot, and the peperoncino in the ½ cup of virgin olive oil. Once the onion and carrot have softened add 1 tablespoon each of thyme and rosemary, and the fennel seed. Continue to cook for 3 or 4 minutes. Add the garlic and sauté for 2 minutes, making sure it doesn't burn.

Add the tomatoes plus their juices. Crush with a potato masher or chop them before adding to the kettle. Return the meats and any accumulated liquid to the tomato ragu. If the tomatoes are too tart, add the teaspoon of sugar. Add salt and pepper, to taste, as well as chopped fresh basil. Simmer for 1 to 1½ hours until the sauce has thickened.

For the Cheese Mixture and Pasta:

1 pound of whole-milk mozzarella

2 eggs beaten

1½ pounds of whole-milk ricotta

1 handful of chopped parsley

1½ cups of grated Parmigiano

1½ pounds of ziti or penne

Grate the mozzarella in the large holes of a grater. Lightly mix the ricotta, the eggs, the parsley and half of the grated mozzarella and Parmigiano. Taste for salt and pepper.

Cook the pasta just until al dente and drain. Lightly oil a large baking pan. Mix the pasta with half of the ragu and ¾ of the cheese mixture. Spread half of the pasta in the baking pan. Spread the remaining cheese mixture, the remaining mozzarella and most of the Parmigiano over the pasta. Coat with more ragu. Spread the remaining pasta on top. Spread with more ragu and sprinkle with the remaining Parmigiano. Bake in a 350° oven for 30-35 minutes until hot. Serve with extra ragu. Serves about 10 people.