

VEGETARIAN LASAGNA

(from the Bewitching Kitchen)

1 package of lasagna noodles
4 cups white mushrooms, sliced
2 T olive oil
salt and pepper
3 cups milk
3 T butter
4.5 T flour
ground nutmeg
3 medium zucchini, sliced lengthwise 1/8 inch thick
lemon juice and zest
1 pound ricotta cheese
1 egg, slightly beaten
1 small package of frozen spinach, defrosted and squeezed dry
1 ounce shredded mozzarella cheese
Grated Parmiggiano Reggiano cheese

Boil the noodles according to the instructions on the package (do not overcook). Plunge the noodles in ice cold water to stop cooking, drain them well and spread on a towel to remove excess moisture. Lay them on a baking sheet brushing them ever so slightly with olive oil if you want to keep the cooked noodles in the fridge for assembling the lasagna later. Cover well with plastic wrap.

Saute the mushrooms in olive oil, seasoning with salt and pepper, until soft and all moisture has been released and evaporated. Reserve. Mix a couple of tablespoons of olive oil with some lemon juice, brush the zucchini slices, season with salt and pepper and grill until nicely marked on both sides. Reserve.

Prepare the ricotta filling by mixing the ricotta with the beaten egg and the spinach, seasoning with salt, pepper, and a little lemon zest. Reserve.

Prepare the béchamel sauce: warm the milk in the microwave. Melt the butter in a heavy-bottomed saucepan, add the flour and cook for 2-3 minutes, stirring constantly. Add the hot milk all at once, whisking to prevent lumps from forming. Season with salt, pepper, and freshly ground nutmeg. Cook until thickened (about 5 minutes). Reserve (dot with butter and place a plastic wrap over it to prevent a thick film from forming).

Assemble the lasagna: Spread some of the béchamel sauce on the bottom of a baking dish. Layer noodles to cover the surface with a slight overlap. Add the mushrooms, and moisten them slightly with a few tablespoons of béchamel sauce. Add another layer of noodles. Layer the zucchini slices over them, add another layer of noodles. Spoon the ricotta mixture carefully on top, add noodles to cover it, and spread the béchamel sauce on top, making sure to cover the whole surface. Add the shredded mozzarella, sprinkle some Parmigiano, and cover with aluminum foil.

Bake at 375 F for 30 minutes, uncover, bake for 15 minutes to brown the surface. If necessary, increase the oven temperature or turn the broiler in the last few minutes. Remove from the oven, let it rest for 15 to 20 minutes before serving.