

A VERY GOOD LASAGNA

Serves 6 to 10

This lasagna has won me many friends and it could do the same for you. For me, a very good lasagna isn't overly cheesy or too saucy or insanely indulgent—Just like I like my pizza, I want an even ratio of starch:sauce:cheese. While I do love a creamy lasagna, I find bechamels aren't really for me and instead use heavy cream in conjunction with the ricotta and mozzarella to keep things nice and saucy.

Sauce

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 large yellow onion, finely chopped

4 garlic cloves, finely chopped

6 anchovy fillets (optional)

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 tablespoons tomato paste

1 (28-ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes

1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes

Assembly

1½ pounds fresh mozzarella, grated or shredded

16 ounces (2 cups) whole-milk ricotta

1 cup coarsely grated parmesan, plus more as desired

¼ cup heavy cream

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 pound dried lasagna noodles (not the no-boil variety because I don't trust them)

Olive oil, for drizzling

1. **Make the sauce.** Heat the olive oil in a large, heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, and anchovies and season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is totally softened and translucent (without letting it brown), 8 to 10 minutes. Add the tomato paste and continue to cook, stirring, until the tomato paste has turned a deeper brick- red color, about 2 minutes.
2. Using your hands, crush the whole tomatoes into smaller, bite-sized pieces and add them and the crushed tomatoes to the pot, stirring to scrape up any bits from the bottom. Fill one of the tomato cans halfway with water and add it to the pot. Season with salt and pepper. Bring to a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until the sauce has thickened, 35 to 45 minutes. You want it to be as thick as tomato sauce from a jar.
3. Preheat the oven to 425°F and set a large pot of salted water to boil.
4. **Assemble the lasagna.** Set aside 1 cup mozzarella. In a medium bowl, combine the remaining mozzarella, the ricotta, parmesan, and cream; season with salt and pepper.
5. Cook the lasagna noodles in the boiling water until just softened (before al dente), 4 to 5 minutes. Drain and separate any noodles that are trying to stick together, drizzling them with a bit of olive oil to prevent them from sticking further.
6. Spoon a bit of sauce on the bottom of a 3-quart baking dish and top with a layer of noodles, avoiding any heavy overlap (some overlap is fine and inevitable). Top with about 1¼ cups of sauce, and dollop one-fourth of the cheese mixture over. Top with another layer of noodles and repeat three more times, ending with the last of the noodles and the last of the sauce. Top with the reserved 1 cup mozzarella and more parmesan.
7. Cover loosely with aluminum foil and place the baking dish on a foil-lined rimmed baking sheet (to prevent any overflow from burning on the bottom of your oven). Bake until the pasta is completely tender and cooked through and the sauce is bubbling up around the edges, 25 to 30 minutes. Remove the foil and continue to bake until the lasagna is golden brown on top with frilly, crispy edges and corners, another 35 to 45 minutes. Let cool slightly before eating.

DO AHEAD

The sauce can be made up to 1 week ahead, covered, and refrigerated. The lasagna can be baked up to 3 days ahead, wrapped tightly, and refrigerated. To reheat, cover with foil and bake at 375°F for 25 to 45 minutes.

