



Vegetarian Lasagne

I love this vegetarian twist on a classic lasagne. The ricotta mixture is much thicker than the béchamel sauce used in a traditional lasagne, so don't worry that it doesn't form a perfectly smooth layer ... it all evens out in the oven. You can assemble the dish and refrigerate it for a few hours or overnight before cooking, and it's even better reheated. Charteris chardonnay from New Zealand is a great match for the cheese in this recipe, it walks the line between a new world chardonnay and a French Chablis..

Serves 6

METHOD

1. Make Tomato Sauce: place oil in a saucepan over medium heat, stir in onion and salt, cover and cook for about 10 minutes, until soft. Stir in passata, bring to the boil, reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes then set aside.
2. Heat oil in a large, high-sided frying pan over low heat. Add spinach and salt, cover and cook for about 5 minutes, stirring frequently, until spinach is just wilted. Depending on the size of your pan, you may need to add spinach in batches as each lot wilts a little to make room for more. Tip into a strainer to drain.
3. Combine ricotta, 1 cup of parmesan, egg and plenty of pepper. Set aside.
4. Smear a little Tomato Sauce on the base of a baking dish large enough to hold 3 lasagne sheets.
5. Top with 3 lasagne sheets, almost half of the remaining Tomato Sauce and a layer of zucchini slices.
6. Sprinkle with salt, drizzle with half the pesto and scatter half the spinach over the top.
7. Top with half the ricotta mixture, smoothing it out as much as possible.
8. Repeat the layering of 3 lasagne sheets, remaining Tomato Sauce (except for about ¼ cup), zucchini, salt, pesto and ricotta mixture.
9. Add remaining lasagne sheets, smear remaining Tomato Sauce over them and top with mozzarella and remaining parmesan and press down gently.
10. Set lasagne aside for at least 30 minutes.
11. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 200°C.
12. Bake for 30-35 minutes, until well coloured.
13. Slice and serve.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 500g baby spinach leaves
- Salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 500g ricotta
- 1½ cups freshly grated parmesan
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 9 sheets lasagne (see below)
- 2 zucchini, thinly sliced on the diagonal
- ½ cup basil pesto (see below)
- 1 ball buffalo mozzarella, torn

Tomato Sauce

- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 red onion, finely diced
- Salt flakes, to taste
- 1½ cups tomato passata

** Pesto is quick to whizz up or cheat and use a good commercial one.*

** Use lasagne sheets that don't need to be pre-cooked (such as Barilla), the moisture from the sauce softens them as they bake, just be sure it says 'no pre-cook' (or similar) on the pack.*