

Stuffed shells, Lasagna, or Mannicotti [With optional Spinach] and Meat Sauce

** These three Italian dishes vary only on the kind / shape of the pasta you want to use.*

Meat Sauce

1 lb. Italian Sausage
1/2 medium onion chopped, or 1 tbsp dried, minced onion
1 tsp garlic powder or 3 cloves, minced
1 15oz. can crushed or diced tomatoes
1 15oz can tomato sauce
1 heaping Tbsp oregano
2 tsp basil
1/2 tsp thyme

**Peel casing from sausage before cooking*, then cook in medium sauce pan until browned. Chop with spoon while cooking so it forms small bite sized chunks. Remove meat, set aside in bowl lined with paper towels to drain. Pour out fat from pan. Add all ingredients in together and simmer, covered, over med-low heat for 20-30 minutes, stirring occasionally.*

*~~ **While sauce is cooking:** Boil noodles, put together cheese filling, and preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.*

Cheese Filling

**OPTIONAL* 1 package frozen, chopped spinach [thawed and drained well--squeeze the water out as best you can]*

1 small tub of cottage cheese [about 1 1/2 cups]
1/2 cup Grated Parmesan
2 cups mozzarella
Salt and pepper
1 jumbo egg
1 (1-pound) package jumbo pasta shells
1 tsp of both basil and oregano

Combine all together in medium bowl [you really get the best blend,

if you use your hands instead of a spoon.]

Cook pasta shells in boiling, salted water until al dente. Drain and cool to the touch. by running cold water over it while in the collander. Try to keep shells moist until ready to use by covering with two or three wet [not damp, WET] paper towels. If they dry out they will stick together and be ruined.

When sauce has cooked at least 20 minutes, or longer if you really want the flavors to get a change to blend and mellow--Spoon thin layer of sauce over botton of large baking dish. Stuff the shells with the cheese mixture and place in the dish , then cover with meat sauce and add layer of mozzarella if you wish . Cover with foil and bake for approximately 1 hour. Serve.

Lasagna variation: Layer sauce, pasta, cheese, sauce, pasta, cheese. There should be two chese layers and three pasta layers.

***If running low on sauce, skip adding it to 2nd layer and go straight from cheese filling to more noodles, because you really want the top layer of lasagna noodles to be covered completely with sauce or they dry out and get crunchy.