



# Recipe For Lasagne

By Angela D. Taylor

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## Ingredients

### *The pasta:*

- 2 - 1lb. boxes lasagne noodles
  - I like Rienzi because you can really taste the semolina but feel free to use any brand you like - but dried pasta is preferred.

### *For the sauce - yes you are going to make your own fresh sauce!*

- 6 - 16 oz. cans of crushed San Marzano tomatoes
  - make sure they are imported from Italy.

### *For the meat filling:*

- 1 lb ground beef - 85% is fine
  - you need some fat in there for flavor
- 1 lb ground veal
  - if you don't do veal you can just use another lb. of ground beef.
- 1 lb ground pork - I actually substitute sweet Italian sausage
  - 8 links - the filling squeezed out of it's casing.

### *For the cheese filling and topping:*

please use the "whole milk" cheese rather than "part-skim".

If you are on a diet - you shouldn't be eating lasagne!

- 2 lbs. fresh ricotta cheese from a cheese store
  - or if a supermarket is your only option use Polly-O
- 1 ½ lbs. shredded mozzarella cheese
  - the bagged kind from the supermarket is fine.
- 2 cups grated Grana Padano cheese
  - get a block and grate fresh
- 3 jumbo eggs - yolks only

### *For sautéing and seasoning:*

- 2 cups red wine - anything Italian like a Chianti or Valpolicella
- 1 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium sized yellow onion diced
- 6 cloves of fresh garlic peeled & minced
- 1 medium sized sweet bell pepper diced
  - any color okay but I use red or yellow
- 10 leaves fresh basil coarsely chopped
- 2 tbs. fresh Italian parsley chopped
- 2 tbs. dried oregano
- 1 tbs. dried crushed red pepper
- 1 bay leaf - fresh if possible
- Freshly ground black pepper and salt to taste

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## Directions

There are a lot of steps and you will use a lot of pots, pans and utensils - so allow yourself two days preparation and recruit a helper to manage the clean up! Because of points 1. & 2. - most people don't make lasagne very often so I suggest making 2 pans - one to serve and eat right away and one to give as a gift or freeze for another meal. For this reason, the recipe I am providing will yield two (2) 13" x 9" x 3" deep pans.

*Preparation Day 1* (this can be up to 2 days before you actually plan to serve the lasagne):

**Step 1 - Season the Ricotta:** Place the 2 lbs. ricotta cheese into a medium sized mixing bowl. Separate the 3 eggs and add just the yolks to the ricotta. Add the 2 tbs. chopped fresh parsley, 1 tsp. salt & 1 tsp. black pepper and mix well. Cover the ricotta mixture and place in the refrigerator.

**Step 2 - Brown the Meats:** Before starting to cook, mix together the ground beef and ground veal in a bowl - if you are using plain ground pork mix that in too. If you are using sweet sausage, squeeze the filling out of the casings and keep separate from the beef & veal mixture for now. Heat ¼ cup olive oil in a large cast iron skillet over medium flame. Add ½ of the diced onion & ½ of the diced bell pepper, cover and cook

until soft - about 2 minutes. Uncover and add 3 minced cloves of garlic and continue to sauté the onion, pepper & garlic mixture until the garlic begins to brown being careful not to let these items burn. Add the onion, pepper & garlic mixture to the ground meats and mix well. Then add 1 tbs. dried oregano, 1 tsp. salt & 1 tsp. fresh black pepper and mix well into the meat mixture. If using sausage, let the ground meat mixture sit for a few minutes while you begin to brown the sausage. To brown the sausage, use the same skillet you used for the onions, peppers and garlic. The sausage will be very sticky once out of the casing - pull off little bits and put them into the skillet to brown - I like to make tiny ½ inch balls but it's time consuming - so just pulling off little bits is fine too. Once all of the sausage is in the skillet continue to cook over medium heat until it is all browned and a little crispy but not burned. Begin to add the ground meat, onion, peppers & garlic mixture to the skillet and continue to cook and stir until all of the meats are nicely browned. You will have to do this in batches since three pounds of meat will not fit into a skillet. Once cooked, put a large strainer into the sink and pour the meat mixture in to drain off any excess liquid. Then put the meat mixture in a large bowl, set aside on the counter uncovered allowing it to cool a bit.

**Step 3 - Make the Sauce:** Please use at least a 12 quart stock pot - the sauce will only fill it half way but it needs the room to simmer without bubbling over. In a 12 quart stock pot, heat ½ cup olive oil over medium flame. Add the remaining diced onions & bell pepper, cover and cook until soft - about 2 minutes. Uncover, add the remaining 3 minced garlic cloves and sauté uncovered until the garlic begins to brown. Add ½ cup of red wine and continue to sauté for two more minutes. Add all 6 cans of crushed tomatoes, the fresh basil, and the remaining red wine, stir well. Add salt and pepper to your liking - I personally use two teaspoons of each but use your own judgement and taste preferences. Cover and lower the flame to simmer and cook the sauce for 2 hours but stirring every 15 minutes - use a timer if you have one - you don't want the sauce to burn on the bottom. After 2 hours turn off the flame and allow the sauce to remain on the stove, covered where it can cool completely to room temperature - this will take several hours. Once it is at room temperature store overnight in the refrigerator.

**Step 4 - Combine the Meat and Cheese Mixtures:** While the sauce is simmering take the Ricotta from the refrigerator. In a large bowl combine the meat and Ricotta mixtures mixing together very well. Cover and place in the refrigerator overnight.

### *Preparation Day 2*

(the day you plan to serve / eat the lasagne):

**Step 5 - Preparing to Build the Lasagne:** Take the sauce and the meat/cheese mixture out of the refrigerator and allow to come to room temperature. In a 12 quart stock pot boil 6 quarts of water. Carefully add 1 box of lasagne to the boiling water as a stack and with tongs gently guide the pasta strips into the water so that they all face the same direction but as they soften gently work to keep them from bending / intertwining. The goal is to have straight pieces that you can work with to build the lasagne. Set the timer for 5 minutes - you are only going to par-cook the pasta - you want the pasta to soften but not completely soft. While the pasta is cooking, line a sheet pan with wax paper. After 5 minutes, using tongs, remove the lasagne one by one and place on the wax paper in strips next to each other. When you have one row, cover with wax paper and repeat the process - you don't want the noodles to stick together. Once you have prepared the first box of lasagne in this manner, repeat the steps to cook and prepare the other box of lasagne. Set the pasta aside. Place the 12 quart pot of room temperature sauce on the stove, cover and reheat over a low flame for 30 minutes. Once the sauce is warm, remove from heat and find and remove the bay leaf from the sauce. Add 2 cups of the warm sauce to the room temperature meat/ricotta mixture and stir to combine completely. You are now ready to build your lasagne!

**Step 6 - Build the Lasagne:** Place the 2 lasagne pans side by side on your counter/work area. Ladle sauce to just lightly cover the bottom of each pan. Cover the bottom of each pan with a row of par-cooked lasagne pasta strips. Ladle and spread a thin layer of sauce over the pasta. Sprinkle some of the grated cheese all over the sauce. Next is the 1<sup>st</sup> layer of the meat/ricotta/sauce mixture - make sure there are no gaps - this mixture needs to form a solid ½ inch deep layer over the lasagne strips and to the sides of the pan. Place a 2<sup>nd</sup> row of par-cooked lasagne pasta strips over the meat/ricotta/sauce mixture but in the opposite direction as the first row of noodles - so if you set the bottom row horizontally, do this row vertically. Ladle and spread a thin layer of sauce over the pasta. Sprinkle some of the grated cheese all over the sauce. Next is the 2<sup>nd</sup> layer of the meat/ricotta/sauce mixture - make sure there are no gaps - this mixture needs to form a solid ½ inch deep layer over the lasagne strips and to the sides of the pan. Place a 3<sup>rd</sup> row of par-cooked lasagne pasta strips over the meat/ricotta/sauce mixture but in the opposite direction as the previous row of noodles. Ladle and spread a thick layer of sauce over the pasta. Sprinkle ¾ lbs. shredded mozzarella over each pan of lasagne - this should be a nice thick coating that completely covers the pasta across to all 4 sides of the lasagne pans. But you should still have about ½" room from the rim of the pan. Cover tightly with aluminum foil being careful not to let the foil rest on the mozzarella - you don't want the cheese to stick to the foil. IF YOU ARE GOING TO FREEZE ONE PAN OF LASAGNE FOR A LATER DATE DO SO BEFORE COOKING.

**Step 7 - Baking the Lasagne:** Pre-heat oven to 375 degrees. Place covered lasagne pan in oven and bake for 45 minutes. Remove cover and bake for 15 minutes more or until the mozzarella on top is lightly browned. Remove from oven and let set for 15 minutes before cutting - if you cut too soon it will be runny.

**Step 8 - Eat and Enjoy the Lasagne - probably for several days:** To have an authentic Angelina's or La Marionette dining experience — serve this lasagne with crusty Italian bread and a nice bottle of wine - for those over 21 - or ginger ale! Buon Appetito! A few more helpful hints: After you build the lasagne, you should have about 2 quarts of sauce left over - save this for any left-over lasagne before re-heating in the oven microwave. If you froze one of the pans of lasagne for a later date, let it thaw out before following the "Baking the Lasagne" instructions.

## *Angela D. Taylor*

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