



Baked Penne with Sausage

Makes: 8-10 servings

Prep Time: 40 minutes Cook Time: 50 minutes

Total Time: 1 hour & 30 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 pound penne noodles
- 1 & 1/2 pounds ground spicy or sweet Italian sausage (or removed from casings)
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 & 1/2 tsp sugar
- 1/4 tsp crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1/3 cup plus 3 tablespoons grated pecorino Romano (or Parmigiano Reggiano) cheese, divided
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh basil, plus more for serving
- 8 ounces whole milk mozzarella cheese, shredded (about 2 cups)

Instructions

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook the ziti according to the package directions for very al dente, about 7 minutes. (It will continue to cook in the oven so you want to undercook it just a bit.) Drain and add the pasta back to the pot. Set aside.

Preheat the oven to 425°F and set the oven rack in the middle position.

Heat a large sauté pan (preferably nonstick) over medium-high heat. Crumble the sausage into the pan and cook, breaking apart with a wooden spoon, until lightly browned and just cooked through, 5 to 6 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the cooked sausage to a plate. Drain all but 1 tablespoon of the fat from the pan and set over low heat (if you don't have enough fat in the pan, add a tablespoon of olive oil). Add the garlic and cook, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until soft but not browned, about 1 minute. Add the crushed tomatoes, salt, sugar and red pepper flakes and simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes.

Add the cream, 1/3 cup of the pecorino Romano, cooked sausage, and basil to the pan; stir until evenly combined. Carefully pour the contents of the sauté pan into the large pot with the pasta and gently stir to combine. Spoon half of the mixture into a 9 x 13-inch baking dish. Sprinkle with half of the shredded mozzarella and half the remaining pecorino Romano. Spoon the remaining pasta mixture on top and sprinkle with the remaining mozzarella and pecorino Romano. Transfer to the oven and bake, uncovered, until the cheese has melted and browned, 15 to 20 minutes. Sprinkle with more basil and serve.

Chef's Note:

Make-Ahead/Freezer-Friendly Instructions: The dish can be assembled, covered, and refrigerated for up to 2 days in advance, or frozen for up to 3 months. (If frozen, defrost in the refrigerator overnight.) Whether refrigerated or frozen and defrosted, bake, covered tightly with aluminum foil, in a 425°F oven for 25 minutes. Then uncover and bake for another 10 to 15 minutes, until the cheese is lightly browned and the pasta is hot throughout.

Recipe from Once Upon a Chef