



Manicotti with Meat Sauce

Serves 10

Steps

- For the Sauce.** In a large pot, begin browning sausage and beef over high heat – taking care to break up the pieces so as not to have large chunks. When meat is cooked, remove liquid in pot (water/fat).
- Add oil to the pot of cooked meat and continue cooking in high adding the onions and garlic. Stir while cooking on high for 5 minutes as you add in the crushed pepper, thyme, oregano, salt and black pepper. Now add both cans of tomatoes and water. Add tomato paste. Stir well. Bring sauce to a boil then lower heat to simmer. Put the lid on and continue cooking for 1 ½ – 2 hours, stirring every 15–20 minutes. Taste for seasoning before serving over pasta. This make a lot of sauce. Serve some now with manicotti and freeze the rest.
- For the manicotti.** Get two baking dishes (9 x 13) ready. Preheat oven to 350°F. Add two cups of marinara sauce to the bottom of each pan.
- In a large bowl combine ricotta cheese, spinach, mozzarella, ½ cup parmesan, eggs, basil, parsley, nutmeg, salt and pepper. Using two gallon-size zip top bags as a pastry/piping bag, fill each with half the cheese mixture. Cut the corner off one of the bottoms and begin filling each manicotti with cheese. Place filled manicotti on top of sauce. Once all manicotti are filled, ladle meat sauce on top making sure all the noodles are covered with sauce. Cover pans with foil.
- Bake for 40 – 50 minutes or until the sauce is bubbling and the manicotti is fork tender. Remove from oven and top with remaining parmesan cheese. Serve hot.

Ingredients for the Sauce

- 1 pound bulk Italian sausage (or one pound links, casings removed)
- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large brown onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme, crushed
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano, crushed
- 2 teaspoons Kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- 1 (28-ounce) can petite diced tomatoes
- 1 cup water
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste

For the Manicotti

- 2 pounds ricotta cheese
- 1 cup frozen, defrosted spinach (juice squeezed out)
- 2 cups mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup grated parmesan cheese, divided
- 2 eggs, whisked
- ½ cup fresh basil leaves, chopped
- ¼ cup fresh Italian parsley, chopped
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 2 (8-ounce) boxes of manicotti
- 4 cups of good marinara sauce (store bought is fine)
- 4–5 cups prepared meat sauce