

FROM CAPE COD MAGAZINE, APRIL 2006

Chicken, Spinach, and Prosciutto Lasagna

Lasagna is the quintessential symbol of a good homemade meal. But it takes time. By making multiple servings at once, you can spend the time when you have it, but still have homemade lasagna when you don't. This tomato-free version, with shredded chicken, spinach, and an alfredo sauce made with feta cheese, would also be great with olives or sundried tomatoes, as well.

Be sure to thaw the spinach completely before beginning.

Tip: It's easiest to build all the lasagnas at once, instead of building them one at a time.

FOR THE CHICKEN:

6 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 12), fat trimmed
2 tablespoons olive oil
Salt and freshly ground pepper

FOR THE ALFREDO SAUCE:

1/2 gallon (8 cups) whole milk
1/2 gallon (8 cups) lowfat milk
4 sticks unsalted butter (2 cups)
2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg
2 teaspoons salt
1 1/2 teaspoons pepper
2 pounds feta cheese, crumbled

FOR THE SPINACH FILLING:

6 10-ounce packages chopped spinach, thawed
3 15-ounce containers whole milk ricotta
3 15-ounce containers part-skim ricotta
8 large eggs
2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon pepper
3/4 teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg

FOR LAYERING:

4 pounds lasagna noodles (18 per package)
Olive oil spray
48 thin slices prosciutto (1 1/2 to 1 3/4 pounds)
20 cups shredded mozzarella cheese

Special Equipment:

2 large soup pots

2 very large mixing bowls
2 large roasting pans, or 4 9" x 13" pans, for soaking the pasta
6 foil lasagna pans (about 9 1/2" x 12 1/2" x 2")
Wax paper, foil, plastic wrap, and labels

1. Bake the chicken: Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Line two rimmed baking sheets with foil. Place the trimmed chicken breasts in a large bowl, and coat them evenly with the olive oil. Season liberally with salt and pepper, and arrange 6 breasts on each baking sheet. Bake for 20 minutes, rotating the sheets top to bottom and end to end after 10 minutes, or until cooked through. Set the chicken aside to cool.
1. Make the alfredo sauce: Add both milks to a large soup pot. Heat over medium heat until steaming, but not boiling. Melt the butter in a separate large (at least 1 gallon) soup pot over medium heat. When the butter has melted completely and the foam begins to subside, sprinkle the flour in, whisking immediately to form a smooth sauce. Cook for 2 minutes, stirring constantly as the mixture bubbles. Add half the milk in a slow, steady stream, whisking continuously to break up the sauce as it thickens at the bottom of the pan. Stir until the mixture has thickened substantially and begins to bubble (about 5 to 10 minutes), and add the remaining milk. Cook until the mixture comes to a bare simmer, and simmer for 2 minutes, stirring. Remove the sauce from the heat and add the nutmeg, salt, pepper, and feta, stirring until smooth. Taste the sauce and season with additional salt and pepper if needed, and set aside.
1. Make the spinach filling: Place all the spinach in a bowl. Working next to the sink, take a handful of the spinach and squeeze all the liquid out over the sink. Place the dried spinach in a very large mixing bowl, and repeat with the remaining spinach. Add the ricotta, eggs, salt, pepper, and nutmeg to the bowl, and stir until completely combined. Set aside.
1. Par-cook the pasta: Divide the dry lasagna noodles between 2 large roasting pans or 4 9"x13" pans. Fill the pans with enough very hot tap water to cover the pasta, move the noodles around to make sure water gets between each layer, and let sit for 25 minutes.
1. Shred the chicken: Using the shredding disk of a food processor, first cut the chicken breasts in half lengthwise, then shred all the chicken in batches. (You can also finely chop the chicken by hand.) Transfer the chicken to a large mixing bowl, and add 7 cups of the alfredo sauce. Stir to combine, and set aside.
1. Spray all 6 lasagna pans with olive oil spray.
2. Build the lasagnas: Spread 3/4 cup of the alfredo sauce on the bottom of each pan. Follow with 4 lasagna noodles, then spread 1 heaping cup of the spinach filling

over the pasta. Add 1 cup of the chicken mixture, spreading it out into an even layer. Follow the chicken with 4 strips of prosciutto, and sprinkle the prosciutto evenly with 1 cup of mozzarella. Repeat the layers: 4 more noodles, 1 heaping cup of the spinach filling, 1 cup of the chicken mixture, 4 strips of prosciutto, and 1 cup of mozzarella. Finish off the lasagna by adding 4 more noodles. Spread another 3/4 cup of the alfredo sauce on in an even layer (you can divide up any remaining sauce among the 6 pans), and sprinkle the top of each lasagna with a heaping cup of mozzarella cheese. Let cool to room temperature, if still warm.

1. Cut six sheets of wax paper to fit the tops of the pans. Place one on each pan, and seal each pan with a layer of foil. Wrap each pan completely in plastic wrap (if freezing), and label with cooking instructions. Freeze.
2. To bake, thaw the pasta completely by placing it in the refrigerator 36 to 48 hours before baking (24 hours is not enough!). Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Remove the plastic, and place the pan on a baking sheet. Bake the pasta for 1 hour. Remove the foil and the wax paper, and bake an additional 20 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and the top is brown and bubbling, and the lasagna is hot in the middle. Serve immediately.

Note: If you'd like to bake the pasta the same day you make it, simply place the wax- and foil-covered dish in the refrigerator until ready to bake. Bake for 45 minutes, then remove the foil and wax paper and bake an additional 15 to 20 minutes to brown.

Makes (6) servings for 6