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Baked Linguine

Ingredients

1 tablespoon of olive oil 1 onion
2 cloves of garlic
500g lean minced beef*
1 400g can of chopped tomatoes
500g tomato passata
A good squeeze of tomato puree
200g mushrooms
Salt and freshly milled black pepper
A handful of fresh basil
A splash of balsamic vinegar
A good pinch of sugar
275g linguine
300g thick Greek yoghurt
250g mascarpone cheese
2 small balls of fresh mozzarella, about 220g each

Preparation

1. 1. Peel the onion and chop it very finely. Heat the oil in a large saucepan and gently cook the onion to soften it for 3 minutes. Peel and crush the garlic, add it to the onion and cook for another 2 minutes. 2. Add the minced beef and cook until it has browned, breaking it up with a wooden spoon and stirring. * I used lean minced beef with only 5% fat
2. if your meat has a higher fat content, you may wish to drain off some of the fat at this stage, to stop the sauce from being too greasy.
3. 3. Pour in the chopped tomatoes and the passata, add the tomato puree and stir well. Bring to a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 30 minutes, until it has thickened. Wipe and slice the mushrooms thinly and stir them in to cook for the last 10 minutes.
4. 4. Meanwhile, heat the oven to 200 degrees or 180 degrees fan oven. Lightly grease a reasonably large deep ovenproof dish.
5. 5. Towards the end of the cooking time for the meat sauce, cook the linguine according to the instructions, draining when it is al dente.
6. 6. At the end of the cooking time, season the meat sauce with salt and pepper, roughly chop and stir in the basil leaves then add the sugar and balsamic vinegar, adjusting to taste.
7. 7. Mix the yoghurt and mascarpone cheese together well then tip the linguine into the bottom of the prepared dish and spoon the yoghurt and mascarpone on top, spreading it out evenly. Next, spoon the meat mixture on top of that, smoothing it out flat. Bake for about 25 minutes.
8. 8. Meanwhile, preheat the grill. Cut the mozzarella into very thin slices and, when everything in the dish has been heated right through, arrange the mozzarella on top to cover the meat and grill for 5-8 minutes, or until the mozzarella is melted and golden brown.
9. Serve with a lovely fresh green salad.

Cooks Note

Try making this easy pasta dish for a tasty family meal, as a change from the usual spaghetti bolognaise or lasagne; this falls somewhere between the two.

The linguine, or whatever pasta you choose to use, at the base of the dish is separated from the savoury minced beef, tomatoes and mushrooms by a rich, creamy mixture of

thick Greek yoghurt and ricotta cheese, all topped off with slices of fresh mozzarella, grilled until it’s golden and bubbling!

Makes 4 large portions.