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Pasta Al Forno



Ingredients

3 large eggs
1 large onion
2 small carrots
Olive oil
100g butter
800g canned chopped tomatoes
Fresh parsley
Fresh basil
Salt and black pepper
1 teaspoon of sugar
500g penne pasta
200g parmesan cheese
2 balls of mozzarella cheese, about 225g each
4 level tablespoons of flour
800ml milk
Fresh nutmeg

Preparation

1. Hard boil the eggs then cool, peel and chop finely. Cover and set aside.
2. Grate the parmesan cheese, chop the mozzarella into small pieces, then place both into bowls, cover and set aside.
3. Peel and chop the onion then peel and grate the carrots. To make the tomato sauce, gently sauté the onion in a tablespoon of olive oil and 15g of butter for 2-3 minutes then add the grated carrot and cook for another 4 minutes. Stir in the tomatoes and the sugar then cover and simmer very gently for about 40 minutes. Blend until smooth then season with salt and black pepper. Chop a handful each of parsley and basil leaves and stir in.
4. Meanwhile, make the béchamel sauce. Melt 85g of butter in a large saucepan and gradually stir in the sifted flour to make a thick paste. Add the milk a little at a time, stirring it until it is smooth before adding more, until it is all combined. Simmer gently and stir for a minute or two then stir in most of the parmesan, reserving a handful to scatter on the top of the pasta at the end. When the cheese has melted into the sauce, add a good grating of fresh nutmeg and season with salt and black pepper.

5 Preheat the oven to 190 degrees, 170 degrees fan oven.

6 Cook the pasta in plenty of boiling water until just before it is cooked, then drain. Return to the pan and toss in a splash of olive oil to separate the pieces.

7 Take 2 oven dishes and layer the ingredients. Spread a thin layer of tomato sauce on the bottom, then cover with half of the pasta. Sprinkle on half of the chopped mozzarella and hard-boiled egg. Spoon on just enough béchamel sauce to cover. Next add the remaining pasta followed by a final layer of mozzarella and egg and covered with the tomato sauce

8 shake gently to allow it to settle. Spoon on the rest of the béchamel sauce and scatter the reserved parmesan cheese on the top.

9 Bake for about an hour then turn off the oven, cover with foil and leave in there for about another 15 minutes before serving.

Cooks Note

This recipe comes from the diary of an elderly lady living in Italy who used to make large quantities of this pasta dish to feed very hungry people celebrating the end of picking the olives. So if you have to feed a number of people needing a hearty dish that is filling and really tasty, this is for you!

Lovely when accompanied by a dish of ripe tomatoes tossed with fresh basil leaves and a splash of olive oil, and a large green salad.

Serves at least 8.