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by Liz Robb

Tuna, Vegetable and Macaroni Bake

Ingredients

1 large red onion
2 cloves of garlic
1 red chilli
150g chestnut mushrooms
1-2 tablespoons of olive oil
600g canned chopped tomatoes
1 tablespoon of tomato puree
A handful of fresh basil
Half a teaspoon of dried oregano
A pinch of sugar
Salt and black pepper
400g macaroni
2 160g cans of tuna in spring water
A large handful of baby spinach leaves
160g reduced fat mature cheddar cheese

Servings
5
Person

Preparation

1. First prepare the vegetables. Peel and chop the red onion, peel the garlic, deseed and finely chop the chilli then wipe and slice the mushrooms.
2. In a large saucepan, heat the olive oil and gently sauté the chopped onion for about 4 minutes, until soft but not browned. Add the chilli and crushed garlic and cook for a further 2-3 minutes. Pour in the chopped tomatoes then add the tomato puree and the sugar. Roughly tear and add the basil leaves and sprinkle in the oregano, stir and bring to a simmer. Season with salt and black pepper, cover and simmer gently for about 15 minutes.
3. Add the mushrooms to the sauce and continue to cook for another 10 minutes.
4. Preheat the oven to 200 degrees, 180 degrees fan oven.
5. Fold in the drained chunks of tuna, trying not to break them too much, and heat in the sauce. Check the seasoning and, in the last minute, stir in the spinach.
6. Meanwhile, cook the macaroni according to the instructions until just before it is ready, then drain and stir with a drop of oil to prevent it sticking together.
7. Add the pasta to the sauce and mix together well. Tip it into a large ovenproof dish then grate the cheddar cheese evenly over the top. Cook in the preheated oven for about 20 minutes, until the cheese on top is bubbling and golden.

Cooks Note

Tuna pasta bake is one of the old teatime favourites, for very good reasons; it's tasty, satisfying, enjoyed by children, and easy to make with everyday fridge and store cupboard ingredients.

Use the type of pasta your family like, or what you happen to have in the cupboard; I chose macaroni because I wanted to make a healthier alternative to macaroni cheese, but you could easily use penne, fusilli etc. And pack in your favourite vegetables too; this recipe has mushrooms, spinach and red chilli, but vegetables such as broccoli and sweetcorn work really well too.

Serve with lots of fresh salad.

Serves 5