

COOK'S ILLUSTRATED

FOUR-CHEESE LASAGNA

Serves 8 to 10. Published May 1, 2007.

It's important not to overbake the lasagna. Once the sauce starts bubbling around the edges, turn the oven to broil. If your lasagna pan is not broiler-safe, brown the lasagna at 500 degrees for about 10 minutes. Whole milk is best in the sauce, but skim and low-fat milk also work. Supermarket-brand cheeses work fine in this recipe. The Gorgonzola may be omitted, but the flavor of the lasagna won't be as complex. The test kitchen prefers the flavor and texture of Barilla no-boil noodles, but this recipe will work with most brands. One box of Barilla will yield enough noodles for this recipe; you may need two boxes of other brands.

- 6** ounces Gruyère cheese , shredded (about 1 1/2 cups)
- 2** ounces Parmesan cheese , finely grated (about 1 cup)
- 1 1/2** cups part-skim ricotta cheese
- 1** large egg , lightly beaten
- 1/4** teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2** tablespoons minced fresh parsley leaves plus an additional 2 teaspoons
- 3** tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1** medium shallot , minced (about 3 tablespoons)
- 1** medium clove garlic , minced or pressed through garlic press (about 1 teaspoon)
- 1/3** cup all-purpose flour
- 2 1/2** cups whole milk
- 1 1/2** cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1/2** teaspoon table salt
- 1** bay leaf
- Pinch cayenne pepper
- 15** no-boil lasagna noodles
- 8** ounces fontina cheese , rind removed, shredded (about 2 cups)
- 3** ounces Gorgonzola cheese , finely crumbled (about 3/4 cup)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Place Gruyère and 1/2 cup Parmesan in large heatproof bowl. Combine ricotta, egg, black pepper, and 2 tablespoons parsley in medium bowl. Set both bowls aside.
- 2.** Melt butter in medium saucepan over medium heat until foaming; add shallot and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until beginning to soften, about 2 minutes. Add flour and cook, stirring constantly, until thoroughly combined, about 1 1/2

minutes; mixture should not brown. Gradually whisk in milk and broth; increase heat to medium-high and bring to full boil, whisking frequently. Add salt, bay leaf and cayenne, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer until sauce thickens and coats the back of a spoon, about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally with heatproof rubber spatula or wooden spoon and making sure to scrape bottom and corners of saucepan (you should have about 4 cups).

- 3.** 3. Remove saucepan from heat and discard bay leaf. Gradually whisk 1/4 cup sauce into ricotta mixture. Pour remaining sauce over Gruyère mixture and stir until smooth; set aside while softening noodles.
- 4.** 4. Adjust oven rack to upper middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Place noodles in 13 by 9-inch baking dish and cover with very hot tap water; soak 10 minutes, agitating noodles occasionally to prevent sticking. Remove noodles from water, place in single layer on kitchen towel, and pat dry. Wipe out baking dish and spray lightly with nonstick cooking spray.
- 5.** 5. Distribute 1/2 cup sauce in bottom of baking dish. Place 3 noodles in single layer on top of sauce. Spread 1/2 cup ricotta mixture evenly over noodles and sprinkle evenly with 1/2 cup fontina and 3 tablespoons Gorgonzola. Drizzle 1/2 cup sauce evenly over cheese. Repeat layering of noodles, ricotta, fontina, Gorgonzola, and sauce 3 more times. Place final 3 noodles on top and cover completely with remaining sauce, spreading with rubber spatula and allowing to spill over noodles. Sprinkle evenly with remaining 1/2 cup Parmesan.
- 6.** 6. Spray large sheet foil with nonstick cooking spray and cover lasagna; bake until edges are just bubbling, 25 to 30 minutes, rotating pan halfway through baking time. Remove foil and turn oven to broil. Broil until surface is spotty brown, 3 to 5 minutes. Cool 15 minutes. Sprinkle with remaining 2 teaspoons parsley; cut into pieces and serve.

RECIPE TESTING

Four Common Problems with Four-Cheese Lasagna



Too Runny: Solution—Make the béchamel sauce thicker by adding more flour than usual.



Too Dry: Solution—Soak the no-boil noodles in hot water and don't skimp on the béchamel sauce.



Too Grainy: Solution—Bake the lasagna as gently as possible to keep the sauce from curdling.



Too Greasy: Solution—Stabilize the Gruyère with some flour to keep it from leaving behind pools of grease.



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