

Nonna's Ricotta & Spinach Cannelloni (STUFFED MANICOTTI)

Cooking Time

- **Preparation Time:** 30 minutes
- **Cooking Time:** 1 hour
- **Total Time:** 1 hour 30 minutes
- **Servings:** 4

Ingredients

For the Cannelloni

- 2 cups (250 g) fresh egg pasta sheets or 12 ready-to-use cannelloni tubes
- 10 oz (300 g) fresh spinach
- 1 cup (250 g) ricotta cheese
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (70 g) grated Grana Padano cheese
- 1 whole egg
- Salt, to taste
- Black pepper, to taste
- Nutmeg, to taste
- Extra virgin olive oil, as needed

For the Ragù Sauce

- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 small carrot, finely chopped
- 1 celery stalk, finely chopped
- 7 oz (200 g) ground beef
- 7 oz (200 g) ground pork (optional for richer flavor)
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups (350 ml) tomato puree or crushed tomatoes
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (120 ml) water or red wine (optional for depth)

For Baking

- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups (350 ml) béchamel sauce
- Grated Grana Padano for topping

Method

Step 1: Prepare the Spinach Filling

1. Clean and remove tough stems from spinach.
2. Blanch in salted boiling water for 3 minutes, drain and cool.
3. Squeeze out excess water, chop finely.
4. In a bowl, mix spinach with ricotta, egg, $\frac{2}{3}$ of the grated cheese, nutmeg, salt, and pepper until smooth.

Step 2: Prepare the Ragù Sauce

1. Heat oil in a pan. Add onion, carrot, and celery; sauté until soft.
2. Add the ground meat, cook until browned.
3. Stir in tomato puree and water or wine. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Simmer uncovered for 30–40 minutes, until thickened and flavorful.

Step 3: Prepare the Pasta

- If using fresh pasta sheets: briefly boil, then cool in water with a splash of oil.
- If using dry cannelloni tubes: no need to pre-cook (they will soften while baking).

Step 4: Fill the Cannelloni

- Place a spoonful of ricotta-spinach filling onto each pasta sheet and roll.
- For tubes, use a piping bag or small spoon to fill them.

Step 5: Assemble and Bake

1. In a baking dish, spread a layer of ragù sauce.
2. Arrange the cannelloni over the sauce.
3. Cover with béchamel sauce and additional ragù on top.
4. Sprinkle with the remaining grated cheese.
5. Bake at 350°F (180°C) for 30 minutes. Broil for the last 5 minutes for a golden crust.