

1. Classic Lasagna with Meat Sauce (Lasagne alla Bolognese)

Cooking Time and Servings

- **Preparation Time:** 20 minutes
 - **Cooking Time:** 2 hours 30 minutes (including ragù simmering and baking)
 - **Total Time:** ~2 hours 50 minutes
 - **Servings:** 8 generous portions
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Ingredients

For the Ragù (Meat Sauce)

- 1.5 lbs (700 g) ground beef
- 1 large carrot, finely chopped
- 1 celery stalk, finely chopped
- 1/2 medium onion, chopped
- 4 cups (1 liter) tomato purée
- 1/2 cup dry red wine
- Salt, to taste
- 3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Fresh lasagna sheets (about 1 lb or 450–500 g)
- Grated Parmesan cheese, to taste

For the Béchamel Sauce

- 4 cups (1 liter) whole milk
 - 7 tbsp (100 g) unsalted butter
 - 3/4 cup (100 g) all-purpose flour
 - Salt, to taste
 - Nutmeg, to taste (about 1/4 tsp)
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Method: Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Prepare the Ragù

1. Finely chop the carrot, celery, and onion.
2. In a large pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add the vegetables and sauté until soft.
3. Add ground beef. Cook, breaking it up, until browned.
4. Pour in red wine and let it evaporate completely.
5. Stir in tomato purée. Rinse the container with a bit of water and add to the pot.
6. Season with salt, cover, and simmer on low heat for about **2 hours**, stirring occasionally.

2. Make the Béchamel

1. In a saucepan, melt butter over low heat.
2. Add flour and stir to form a smooth roux.
3. Gradually whisk in milk, stirring continuously to avoid lumps.
4. Add salt and nutmeg.
5. Cook on medium heat until thickened (about 10–15 minutes). Set aside.

3. Assemble the Lasagne

1. Preheat oven to **350°F (180°C)**.
2. Spread a thin layer of meat sauce and béchamel on the bottom of a 9x13 inch baking dish.
3. Add a layer of pasta sheets.
4. Add meat sauce, béchamel, and Parmesan cheese.
5. Repeat layers until ingredients are used up (about 4–5 layers).
6. Top final layer with béchamel and Parmesan only.

4. Bake

1. Cover with foil and bake for **20 minutes**.
2. Remove foil and bake uncovered for **5 more minutes** until golden.
3. Let rest for at least 15 minutes before serving.



Tips and Tricks

- **Use fresh pasta sheets** that don't require pre-boiling, or blanch dry pasta briefly before layering.
- **Make ahead:** Lasagna tastes even better the next day. You can refrigerate it before baking.

- **Freeze before baking** for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight before baking.
- **Add herbs** like a bay leaf or rosemary sprig to the ragù for added aroma.

Can You Make Lasagna the Day Before? Here's How to Store and Reheat It Perfectly!

You can definitely prepare **lasagna the day before** and reheat it **the next day** — in fact, it often tastes **even better** because the flavors have time to blend together.

Here are some practical tips 🖐️

◇ **If you want to keep it in the fridge:**

- Let the lasagna cool completely at room temperature.
- Cover it tightly with **plastic wrap** or **aluminum foil**.
- Store it in the refrigerator for up to **24 hours**.
- The next day, reheat it in the oven covered with foil (to keep it from drying out) at **340–350°F (170–180°C)** for **about 20–25 minutes**, then remove the foil for the last 5 minutes so it gets a nice crust on top.

◇ **If you want to store it longer:**

- You can also **prepare and freeze it** either before baking or after it's been baked and cooled.
- To reheat from frozen, let it **thaw overnight in the fridge**, then warm it up in the oven as above.

💡 **Nonna's tip:**

Add **a few tablespoons of milk** or a bit of **béchamel sauce** on top before reheating — this keeps it soft and creamy, just like freshly baked. 😊

2. Ragù alla Bolognese (Authentic Bolognese Sauce)

The most iconic Italian comfort dish. Ragù alla Bolognese is slow-cooked, velvety, and traditionally served with **tagliatelle**, not spaghetti.

Cooking Time

- **Preparation time:** 15–20 minutes
 - **Cooking time:** 2–4 hours
 - **Servings:** 6
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Ingredients

- **2 tbsp** extra virgin olive oil
- **1 tbsp** unsalted butter
- **1 large** yellow onion, finely chopped
- **1** medium carrot, finely chopped
- **1** celery stalk, finely chopped
- **3 cloves** garlic, minced
- **1 lb** ground beef
- **½ lb** ground pork
- **½ lb** ground veal (*optional; or replace with more pork/beef*)
- **1 cup** whole milk
- **1 cup** dry white wine (*or red wine*)
- **1 can (28 oz)** whole peeled tomatoes, crushed by hand (*or use passata*)

- **½ cup** beef broth
 - **2 tbsp** tomato paste
 - **1** bay leaf
 - **Salt and pepper**, to taste
 - **Fresh nutmeg**, a pinch (*optional but traditional*)
 - **Freshly grated Parmesan**, for serving
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Method

1. Sauté the aromatics

- Heat olive oil and butter in a large heavy-bottomed pot.
- Add onion, carrot, and celery. Sauté on medium for 10 minutes until softened and golden.
- Stir in garlic and cook for 2 more minutes.

2. Brown the meat

- Add beef, pork, and veal. Cook over medium-high heat until browned, about 10 minutes.
- Season with salt and pepper.
- Stir in tomato paste and cook for 2–3 minutes to deepen the flavor.

3. Add milk

- Pour in the milk and let it simmer gently until absorbed, about 10 minutes.

4. Deglaze with wine

- Add the wine and stir, scraping any browned bits from the bottom. Simmer until it reduces, about 5–7 minutes.

5. Add tomatoes and broth

- Stir in crushed tomatoes, beef broth, bay leaf, and a pinch of nutmeg if using.
- Bring to a gentle simmer, reduce heat to low, and partially cover.

6. Slow cook

- Let simmer gently for 2 to 4 hours, stirring occasionally. Add a bit of broth if too thick.
- Remove bay leaf and adjust seasoning before serving.

7. Serve

- Toss with fresh pasta like tagliatelle, pappardelle, or rigatoni.
- Finish with grated Parmigiano Reggiano.

Tips & Tricks

- Use whole milk and don't skip it — it helps soften the acidity of the tomato and tenderizes the meat.
 - The longer the cooking time, the richer the sauce.
 - Leftovers taste even better the next day and freeze beautifully.
 - Add a parmesan rind during simmering for extra depth!
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3. Chicken Cutlets (Cotoletta alla Milanese)

A beloved weeknight classic. Thin chicken cutlets, breaded and pan-fried until perfectly crisp — simple, comforting, and deeply Italian.

Servings: 4

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 10 minutes

Total Time: 25 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 lb chicken breasts, sliced thinly
 - 1 cup all-purpose flour
 - 2 large eggs
 - 1 ½ cups breadcrumbs
 - ½ cup grated Parmigiano Reggiano
 - ½ tsp salt
 - Black pepper
 - Olive oil for frying
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Method (Step-by-Step)

1. Pound chicken until ¼-inch thin.
2. Prepare three bowls: flour, beaten eggs, breadcrumbs mixed with Parmigiano, salt, pepper.
3. Dredge chicken in flour → egg → breadcrumbs.
4. Heat olive oil in a skillet.
5. Fry cutlets 3–4 minutes per side until golden brown.

6. Drain on paper towels and serve with lemon wedges.

4. Eggplant Parmesan (Parmigiana di Melanzane)

One of Italy's most comforting vegetarian dishes. Slices of eggplant are lightly fried, layered with tomato sauce, basil, and mozzarella, then baked to perfection.

Cooking Time

- **Prep Time:** 30 minutes
 - **Cooking Time:** 50 minutes
 - **Total Time:** 1 hour 20 minutes
 - **Servings:** 6
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Ingredients

For the Eggplant:

- 3 medium eggplants, sliced into ¼-inch rounds
- 1 tbsp salt (for degorging)
- 1 cup (125 g) all-purpose flour
- 3 large eggs, beaten
- 2 cups (200 g) breadcrumbs
- ½ cup (120 ml) olive oil, for frying

For the Sauce:

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 can (28 oz/800 g) crushed tomatoes
- 1 tsp dried basil
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- Salt and pepper, to taste

For Assembly:

- 1 ½ cups (150 g) grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese
 - 2 cups (200 g) shredded mozzarella cheese
 - Fresh basil leaves, for garnish
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Step-by-Step Method

1. Prepare the Eggplant:

1. Arrange the eggplant slices in a colander and sprinkle with salt. Let them sit for **30 minutes** to draw out moisture and reduce bitterness.
 2. Rinse the slices under cold water and pat them dry with paper towels.
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2. Coat and Fry the Eggplant:

1. Set up a breading station with three bowls: one with flour, one with beaten eggs, and one with breadcrumbs.
 2. Dredge each eggplant slice in flour, dip it into the eggs, and coat it in breadcrumbs.
 3. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Fry the breaded eggplant slices in batches until golden brown on both sides, about **2–3 minutes per side**. Drain on paper towels.
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3. Make the Tomato Sauce:

1. Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic, and sauté until softened, about **5 minutes**.
 2. Stir in the crushed tomatoes, basil, oregano, salt, and pepper. Simmer for **15–20 minutes**, stirring occasionally.
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4. Assemble the Parmigiana:

1. Preheat your oven to **375°F (190°C)**.
 2. Spread a thin layer of tomato sauce on the bottom of a baking dish. Add a layer of fried eggplant slices.
 3. Sprinkle with Parmigiano cheese and mozzarella. Top with a layer of sauce. Repeat the layers until all ingredients are used, finishing with sauce and a generous layer of mozzarella and Parmesan on top.
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5. Bake:

1. Cover the dish with aluminum foil and bake for **25 minutes**.
 2. Remove the foil and bake for an additional **15 minutes**, or until the cheese is bubbly and golden.
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6. Serve:

1. Let the Eggplant Parmigiana cool for about **10 minutes** before serving.
 2. Garnish with fresh basil leaves and serve warm.
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5. Mushroom Risotto (Risotto ai Funghi)

Creamy, aromatic, and deeply satisfying. This Northern Italian classic is made by slowly cooking Arborio rice with stock until luxuriously creamy.

Servings: 4

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 25 minutes

Total Time: 35 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp olive oil
 - 2 tbsp butter
 - 1 small onion, finely chopped
 - 1 ½ cups Arborio rice
 - 8 oz mushrooms, sliced
 - ½ cup dry white wine
 - 4 cups warm vegetable or chicken stock
 - ½ cup grated Parmigiano Reggiano
 - Salt and pepper
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Method (Step-by-Step)

1. Sauté onion in butter and oil for 5 minutes.
2. Add mushrooms; cook until softened.
3. Add Arborio rice and toast 1–2 minutes.
4. Pour in wine; cook until evaporated.
5. Add stock ½ cup at a time, stirring constantly.
6. Continue until rice is creamy and al dente (about 18 minutes).
7. Stir in Parmigiano, salt, and pepper.
8. Serve immediately.