



Recipe of the Month- August 2008

Spinach, Ricotta, Olive and Sundried Tomato Lasagne

Serves 6

Ingredients:

±200g	Lasagne sheets, hot water for boiling	400-500g	Fresh Spinach leaves, well rinsed, whit vein removed and roughly sliced
30ml	Butter	10ml	Olive Grove (ripe and ready) Rub
	Salt and freshly Ground Black Pepper	500g	Ricotta Cheese or chunky plain cottage cheese
250ml	Fresh Cream	100g	Kalamata Black olives, pitted
50-100g	Sundried Tomatoes		
	<u>Béchamel (white sauce)</u>		
50g	Butter	50g	Flour
500ml	Milk		Salt and white pepper
1	Extra-large egg, whisked	125ml	Grated Parmesan or Pecorino Cheese

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C just before you intend baking the lasagna.
2. Soak the dried lasagna sheets for 5 minutes in hot tap water ie. Place sheets in a baking sheet / tray and filling with hot water. I prefer doing this because it shortens the cooking time and makes it easier to cut lasagna if needed to fit perfectly into the lasagna dish. (I find it easier to know beforehand how many sheets to soak if I measure one layer into the lasagna dish and multiply it by four)
3. Place a large saucepan over moderate heat and melt the butter, add the spinach leaves. It might seem like a lot and that the saucepan is going to overflow, but just keep the leaves moving the leaves in the saucepan until it is all wilted. Please do not overcook the spinach, the water that is stuck to the leaves after washing is more than enough liquid for it to cook in. This will take about 2-5 minutes at the most. Season with salt and pepper and the olive grove ripe and ready rub.
4. Remove spinach leaves from heat the moment it is wilted. Leave spinach to cool down for a while. Crumble in the ricotta cheese, add the cream and mix everything through.
5. Make the Béchamel (white) Sauce: Melt butter in medium sized saucepan, add the flour and stir until it forms a paste. Add the milk bit by bit and keep on stirring to prevent lumps. Season with salt and white pepper.
6. Let the sauce cool down a few minutes and stir in the egg.
7. To assemble your lasagna: In a 30cm x 24cm ovenproof dish, start with a thin layer of béchamel (white) sauce, layer with a ¼ of pasta sheets. Spread a 1/3 of the creamy spinach mixture and dot here and there with a 1/3 of the olives and sun dried tomatoes. Keep this going until you have used all the spinach, pasta, olives and sun dried tomatoes.
8. You must end with a layer of lasagna pasta sheets; cover this with the béchamel (white) sauce. Most important - make sure that the pasta is covered all over with the sauce otherwise you going to have pointy ears of pasta popping out as it is drying out while baking in the oven. Sprinkle over the parmesan or pecorino cheese.
9. You can now cover it with cling film and put it in the fridge, or leave it for 15 to 20 minutes to rest before baking. Bake at 180°C for 30-40 minutes until golden brown and smelling delicious.