

# Lasagna

★★★★★  
5 from 22 votes

## Prep Time

20 mins

## Cook Time

4 hr

## Total Time

4 hr 20 mins



One of the most loved foods in the world! This is a lasagna made the traditional Italian way, with a slow cooked ragu and a béchamel sauce ("Besciamella"). There's no ricotta - that's the American-Italian version. Though it requires patience to make, it is worth every minute. The ragu bolognese is melt-in-you-mouth tender and the sauce is rich and thick. The cheese sauce is to die for. And when it's layered up in the lasagne, it is a thing of beauty. Every bite is utterly divine! Recipe video is below and refer to the notes for how mine differs from very authentic Italian recipes. Makes 8 giant or 10 normal servings.

Servings: 10

Calories: 625 kcal

Author: Nagi

## Ingredients

### Ragu Bolognese:

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion , finely chopped (white, yellow or brown)
- 1 medium carrot , finely diced
- 1 rib / stick of celery , finely diced
- 2 garlic cloves , minced
- 1 kg / 2 lb beef mince (ground beef) (Note 1)
- 800 g / 28 oz crushed tomato
- 3 tbsp / 1/4 cup tomato paste
- 1 cup red wine , bold not light (Note 2)
- 3 beef bouillon cubes , crumbled
- 2 bay leaves , dried or fresh
- 1/2 tsp each dried thyme and oregano
- 2 tsp Worcestershire Sauce
- 1 - 2 tsp sugar (if needed - Note 3)
- 1/2 tsp salt and black pepper

### Cheese Sauce (Besciamella):

- 60 g / 4 tbsp butter
- 1/2 cup/ 75g flour
- 1 litre / 1 quart / 4 cups milk (I use low fat)
- 220g/ 2 cups shredded cheese (Colby, Gruyere, Cheddar, Monterey Jack, OR 1 cup shredded parmesan) (Note 4)
- Pinch of freshly ground nutmeg
- Salt and pepper

### Lasagna:

- 350 g/ 12 oz fresh lasagna sheets (or 250g/8oz dried) (Note 5)
- 1 1/2 cups / 150g shredded mozzarella cheese
- Finely chopped basil or parsley , for garnish (optional)

## Instructions

### Ragu:

1. Heat oil in a large heavy based pot over medium heat. Add garlic, onion, celery and carrots. Cook for 10 minutes until softened and sweet - they should not brown (if they do, turn heat down).
2. Add beef, turn heat up and cook the beef, breaking it up as you go.
3. Once the beef has all turned brown, add the remaining Ragu ingredients EXCEPT the sugar.
4. Stir then adjust the heat so it is bubbling very gently. Place the lid on and cook for 2.5 hours, stirring every now and then, then remove the lid and simmer for 30 minutes.
5. The ragu is ready when the meat is really tender and the sauce has thickened and is rich - see video for consistency (Note 6). Adjust salt and pepper to taste, and add sugar if required (Note 3)

### Cheese Sauce:

1. Warm milk up in a saucepan (optional - just makes sauce thicken faster).
2. In a large saucepan, melt butter over medium low heat. Add flour and mix constantly for 1 minute.

3. Pour about 1 cup of the milk in, mixing as you go to incorporate into the flour mixture. Once mostly lump free, add remaining milk. Use a whisk if needed to make it lump free.
4. Turn heat up to medium high. Stir occasionally at first then regularly after a few minutes until sauce thickens - about 5 - 8 minutes. It should coat the back of the wooden spoon.
5. Remove from heat, add cheese, nutmeg, salt and pepper. Mix until the cheese is melted. The Sauce should be thick but still easily pourable - the consistency of heavy cream (you need to be able to drizzle it over the Ragu when layering - see video). If it's too thick, add a splash of water or milk.

#### Assemble:

1. Preheat oven to 180C/350F.
2. Use a 33 x 22 x 7 cm / 13 x 9 x 2.5" baking dish.
3. Smear a bit of Ragu on the base, then cover with lasagna sheets. Tear sheets to fit.
4. Spread over 2 1/2 cups of Ragu (enough to cover sheets), then drizzle over 1 cup of Cheese Sauce.
5. Top with lasagna sheets (Note 7). Spread with another 2 1/2 cups of Ragu, then 1 cup of Cheese Sauce. Top with lasagna sheets then repeat 1 more time.
6. Top with a 4th layer of lasagna sheets, then pour over the remaining Cheese Sauce.
7. Sprinkle with Mozzarella, then bake for 25 minutes or until golden and bubbling.
8. Stand for 5 to 10 minutes before cutting and serving, garnished with basil or parsley if desired.

## Recipe Notes

1. The traditional version is made using a mix of pork and beef. If you wish to do this, use 300g/10oz pork and 700g/1.4lb beef. Pork adds a bit of richness. I do not (usually) do this simply because I feel like the sauce is so beautifully rich anyway (especially with the cheese sauce).
2. Use a bold red, like cab sauv, not a light one like pinot. You can skip the wine if you prefer, just use water instead, or beef broth/stock.
3. Sugar - add this only if you think your sauce has a tinge of sour which can occur depending on the quality of the tomatoes used.
4. Cheese: Use any flavoured melting cheese you want. I don't recommend mozzarella because it doesn't have enough flavour. Also, I have recently discovered that some Tasty Cheese brands do not melt well in béchamel sauces, it can make it a bit floury rather than silky smooth. So it is safest to avoid Tasty cheese. (Tasty is a popular type of Australian cheese).
5. Fresh vs dried lasagna sheets: I like using fresh because I feel that it "melds" better with the filling. For DRIED Lasagna sheets, check the packet to see if it needs to be cooked before using. If it's labelled "Instant" or "No Cook", then you can use it without pre-cooking. If it needs to be cooked in boiling water (like pasta), follow the packet directions but regardless of what the packet says, I would recommend adding a good glug of olive oil in the water before adding the lasagna sheets (extra assurance they won't stick together).

If you use instant dried lasagna sheets, the surface probably won't stay nice and flat, like you see in the photos, as it tends to get "waves" on the surface once cooked. No effect on flavour, it's just visual. Also see Note 5 re: sauciness of ragu for dried instant lasagna sheets (for cooked dried sheets, it essentially becomes fresh lasagna sheets).

Fresh lasagne sheets are sold in the refrigerator section of supermarkets.

6. Ragu Consistency & Making ahead: The Ragu shouldn't be watery and there shouldn't be an excessive amount of sauce. However, if you are using dried lasagna sheets, you do need to ensure that there is enough liquid to rehydrate the sheets. See video to see how saucy my ragu is - this is saucy enough for dried lasagna sheets.

If you aren't using a heavy based pot, you may find you need to add a splash of water during the cook time (heavy pot = heavy lid = clamps down better = less water evaporation).

If you make ahead (I often do), reheat the ragu and you may need to add a splash of water. Reason is that if you leave it overnight in the fridge, it thickens and is harder to spread, plus if you are using dried sheets there may not be enough liquid to rehydrate the lasagne sheets / this sucks out all the liquid from the sauce leaving you with meat layers that aren't that saucy in the finished lasagna.

7. SHEET PLACEMENT: If you watch the video, you will see I place the sheets in one direction for one layer, then the next time I place them 90 degrees the other way. This just helps the sheets stay in place a bit better when cutting - but it's not a big deal!

8. Though there are many versions of Lasagna throughout Italian, typically, strictly authentic Italian Lasagnas are usually made with pancetta, milk and a mix of pork as well as beef in the ragu. They are also made with passata rather than crushed tomato, has not tomato paste, bouillon cubes or Worcestershire and quite often

