RECIPE

Baked Ziti

A winter dinner of whole-wheat ziti, lean beef, lentils and low-sodium marinara layered with part-skim ricotta and a little mozzarella and baked until bubbling, made in one pot and one dish for eight.

MAKES

8 servings US Metric

TOTAL

1 h 30 min

Ingredients

- [ ] 1 lb dry whole-wheat ziti
- [ ] 1 tsp salt, for the pasta water
- [ ] Cooking spray, for the dish
- [ ] 1 tbsp olive oil
- [ ] ¼ lb 97% lean ground beef
- [ ] 2 cups cooked brown lentils, drained
- [ ] 1 medium onion, diced
- [ ] 1 tsp garlic powder
- [ ] ½ tsp salt
- [ ] ¼ tsp black pepper
- [ ] 1 tsp Italian seasoning
- [ ] 1 jar (24 oz) low-sodium marinara sauce
- [ ] 1 can (28 oz) no-salt-added crushed tomatoes
- [ ] 1 container (8 oz, 227 g) part-skim ricotta

Method

1. Heat the oven to 375 °F. Spray a 9 × 13-inch dish. Boil the ziti in a big pot of water with the 1 tsp salt. Water boils at about 203 °F a mile up, so go by the bite, not the clock, and drain it while it still has a firm center, about 2 minutes short of the package time. Drain it and leave it in the colander.

2. Put the same pot back over medium-high heat with the oil. Cook the beef and onion, breaking the beef up, until no pink is left and the onion is soft, about 8 minutes. Stir in the garlic powder, salt, pepper and Italian seasoning for 1 minute.

3. Pour in the marinara and the crushed tomatoes, add the lentils, and stir until it bubbles. Add the drained ziti and stir until every piece is coated.

- [ ] 1 egg
- [ ] ½ cup (2 oz, 57 g) shredded part-skim mozzarella, divided
- [ ] ¼ cup grated reduced-fat Parmesan

4. Stir the ricotta, egg, ¼ cup (28 g) of the mozzarella and the Parmesan together in a bowl. Spread half the pasta in a 9 × 13-inch dish. Dot with the ricotta mix, then cover with the rest of the pasta.

5. Cover the dish tightly with foil. Bake 30 minutes. Uncover, scatter on the remaining ¼ cup mozzarella, and bake 15 minutes more, until the cheese is browned in spots and the sauce bubbles at the edges.

6. The egg and the beef both call for a hot center: an instant-read thermometer in the middle should read 160 °F. Rest 10 minutes before cutting so it holds its shape.

7. Cool leftovers no more than 2 hours, then refrigerate. Reheat portions to 165 °F.