

Cheesy Baked Penne with Eggplant

SERVES 8



One of my favorite dishes to make for my family is this baked pasta dish, with all its cheesy goodness and hidden bits of sweet eggplant. Picky eaters of all ages—and devout meat eaters, too—love this dish.

Olive oil spray or oil mister

1 cup (8 ounces) fat-free ricotta cheese

2 cups shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese (8 ounces)

½ cup grated Pecorino Romano cheese

¼ cup chopped fresh parsley

1 tablespoon olive oil

4 garlic cloves, roughly chopped

1 eggplant, cut into 1-inch cubes (16 ounces)

2 teaspoons kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

3½ cups canned crushed tomatoes

2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil

12 ounces penne rigate pasta, wheat or gluten-free*

skinny scoop

To freeze, let the pasta cool and then divide it into portions. Wrap the portions in plastic wrap and place them in a large freezer bag. The day before eating, transfer a piece to the refrigerator to thaw overnight.

**Read the label to be sure this product is gluten-free.*

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Spray a 9 × 13-inch baking dish with olive oil.

In a medium bowl, combine the ricotta, 1 cup of the mozzarella, 6 tablespoons of the Romano, and the parsley.

In a large, deep skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, until golden, about 1 minute. Add the eggplant, ¾ teaspoon of the salt, and black pepper, and cook until golden, 4 to 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes, basil, ¼ teaspoon of the salt, and black pepper, reduce the heat to low, and cook until the eggplant is tender, about 5 minutes.

Add the remaining 1 teaspoon salt to a large pot of boiling water. Add the pasta and cook to 4 minutes less than al dente. Drain. Put half of the pasta into the prepared dish and top with one-third of the sauce. Spoon the ricotta mixture on top. Cover with the remaining pasta and sauce. Top with the remaining 1 cup mozzarella and 2 tablespoons Romano. Cover with foil.

Bake for 20 minutes. Remove the foil and bake until the mozzarella is melted and the edges are lightly browned, 6 to 7 minutes.

PER SERVING (ABOUT 1½ CUPS)

CALORIES 325

FAT 9 g

SATURATED FAT 0 g

CHOLESTEROL 20 mg

CARBOHYDRATE 44 g

FIBER 4.5 g

PROTEIN 18 g

SUGARS 6 g

SODIUM 716 mg