

Beef and Cheese Manicotti

Recipe courtesy Giada De Laurentiis

4 teaspoons olive oil
1 medium onion, coarsely chopped
1 pound ground beef
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
14 (8-ounce package) manicotti
1 (15-ounce) container whole-milk ricotta
3 cups shredded mozzarella
1 cup grated Parmesan
2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley leaves
2 garlic cloves, minced
3 cups marinara sauce
2 tablespoons butter, cut into pieces

Heat a heavy medium skillet over medium heat. Add 1 teaspoon of the olive oil, onion and ground beef. Season with salt and pepper. Sauté until the meat browns and the onion is translucent, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat, and cool.

Brush 1 teaspoon of oil over a large baking sheet. Cook the manicotti in a large pot of boiling salted water until slightly softened, but still very firm to the bite, about 4 to 6 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, to transfer the manicotti from the pot to the oiled baking sheet and cool.

Meanwhile, combine the ricotta, 1 1/2 to 2 cups mozzarella cheese, 1/2 cup Parmesan, and parsley. Add the garlic, salt, and pepper to taste, and mix. Stir the cooled meat mixture into the cheese mixture.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

Brush the remaining 2 teaspoons of oil over a 13 by 9 by 2-inch glass baking dish. Spoon 1 1/2 cups of the marinara sauce over the bottom of the prepared dish. Fill the manicotti with the cheese-meat mixture. Arrange the stuffed pasta in a single layer in the prepared dish and spoon the remaining sauce over.

Sprinkle the remaining 1 1/2 cups of mozzarella cheese, then the remaining 1/2 cup of Parmesan over the stuffed pasta. Dot entire dish with the butter pieces. Bake the manicotti uncovered until heated through and the sauce bubbles on the sides of the dish, about 30 to 35 minutes. Let the manicotti stand 5 minutes and serve.

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