

LOVE STARTS IN THE KITCHEN!™ AND THE BEST DOCTOR IS THE COOK!™

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THE BEST (AND EASIEST) BAKED PASTA

Need a quick and easy supper? Assemble it one day, bake it the next. And if someone's late to dinner, you can microwave it, too.

Using natural ingredients from **Susan's Natural World** means you are feeding those you love well. **Susan's has everything you need for this dish.**

Feel free to divide this recipe in half or even double it.

2 cups low fat Ricotta cheese

1/2 to 1 pound sausage, sauteed and drained

3/4 to 1 pound whole wheat Penne or other short pasta shapes, cooked

3-4 cups jarred pasta sauce or enough to cover the pasta generously

1 cup Parmesan cheese or 3 cups shredded Mozzarella plus Parmesan for sprinkling on top.

Spray a 9x13 baking dish. Spread Ricotta evenly on bottom. Sprinkle with sausage. Pour pasta over sausage. Pour sauce over pasta. Sprinkle with cheese. Make a tent of foil and cover. Bake in preheated 375 degree oven until heated through, about 30-40 minutes. May be cooked in microwave on medium high power about 20 minutes, covered, or until heated through. Don't add the mozzarella if cooking in the microwave until the last 10 minutes or so. Serves 8-10.

Tips from Rita's kitchen:

- **If you're vegetarian**, use the soy "sausage". Lean turkey or ground beef can be substituted, as well. Or leave the meat out altogether.
- **For an Italian flair**, use Italian sausage or add a teaspoon Italian seasonings to the sausage as it cooks.
- I like the creaminess the Ricotta gives, but you can leave it out. A crisp salad of hearty greens and garlic bread is all you need to round out this dish.
- **Optional:**
- Stir in with the sauce a **couple handfuls of torn fresh spinach or 1 can Cannelini beans**, drained. If using the beans, add them after you spread the Ricotta in the dish.
- Note: the recipe as given originally fits pretty well into a 9 x 13 pan but if you add the optional ingredients, you may have to use a bigger pan.
- Cremini or button mushrooms **add nutrients and flavor, too.**
- Don't rinse pasta, as this removes some of the carbohydrates.

WHY THIS RECIPE IS GOOD FOR YOU:

- Whole wheat pasta contains vitamin E, fiber to improve digestion and reduces the risk of heart disease and cancer
- Five average sized mushrooms supply about 25% of an adult's copper needs. Believed to have anti-cancer properties, mushrooms may boost the immune system by stimulating white blood cells. Some mushrooms lower cholesterol, as well
- Tomatoes are good for your eyes and can help prevent cataracts; they contain lycopene which is good for the prostate

READ RITA!

My books *Gifts without Ribbons, Culinary Herbs that Heal Body and Soul, The Official Snack Guide for Beleaguered Sports parents and Sports Nutrition for Dummies* (I developed the recipes) are available at Susan's Natural World

RITA'S YUMMY BREAD BLENDS!

Buy them at Susan's Natural World.

RITA ON THE WEB!

Visit my brand new website www.Abouteating.com

Rita Heikenfeld

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SEE RITA!

Don't forget to stop and see me at Macy's Dayton Mall on Saturday.

Also, I'll be a presenter at Speaking of Womens' Health from March 1 through March 5. My topic? Super Foods and Herbs from the Bible!