

BAKED PASTA WITH SAUSAGE, MUSHROOMS AND MASCARPONE



Note: I changed the original recipe to suit my needs and make it easier and more accessible to everyone. I used Kirkland hot Italian sausage in my pasta dish, but if you like less heat, feel free to use mild Italian. I also use regular button mushrooms, but you could use a combination.

It is best to use a short dried pasta for this dish such as macaroni, penne, rigatoni, fusilli, or pasta shells. If you prefer to create a vegetarian version of this dish, skip the sausage and add additional mushrooms etc. You can either make this dish as one large 13- by 9-inch casserole, or bake 6 individual smaller casseroles. Unless it is for a crowd, I make three smaller ones and freeze them. Great for a dinner on the fly.

Ingredients

- 5 tablespoons olive oil , divided
- 3 links Italian sausage (about 3/4 pound total), casings removed (see note above)
- 8 ounces fresh mushrooms, chopped (see note above)
- 1/3 cup finely chopped onion (about 1/2 medium)
- 3 medium cloves garlic, minced (about 1 tablespoon)

4 oz. cream cheese
1/2 cup whole milk
1 cup 35% cream
1/4 cup finely chopped fresh parsley leaves
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 pound pasta of choice
1/3 cup coarse breadcrumbs
1 1/2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley leaves
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese (about 1/2 ounce)

Procedures

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Meanwhile, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat until slightly smoking, and add the sausage meat. Cook until the meat is no longer pink, about 5 minutes, breaking it up with a fork as it cooks. Add the onions, mushrooms, and garlic and cook, stirring often, until the onions are translucent and the mushrooms are lightly browned, about 6 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and add the mascarpone cheese, milk, and chopped parsley. Stir to mix well, and continue to cook until the mixture is thick, about five minutes. Season with salt and pepper, and keep warm.
2. Adjust an oven rack to the center position and preheat oven to 375°F. Cook the pasta in the boiling water, removing it two to three minutes less than the recommended cooking time. It should still retain a slightly raw bite in the center. Reserve a small cup of pasta water, drain, and return pasta to the pot. Toss the pasta with the mushroom and sausage sauce. If the sauce is very thick add about 1/4 cup of the pasta water to loosen.
3. In a small bowl, combine breadcrumbs, parsley, parmesan, and remaining 3 tablespoons olive oil, rubbing the oil into the crumbs with your fingertips.
4. Transfer the pasta to a 13- by 9-inch casserole dish (or 6 smaller ones) and sprinkle the crumb topping over the pasta. Bake until the pasta is bubbly and top is golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes. Serve immediately.

Recipe adapted from About the Author: Deborah Mele is the owner of [Italian Food Forever](#), an Italian recipe blog, as well as [Recipe Rebuild](#), a healthy recipe blog she shares with her daughter Christy, an RD. Deborah lives 6 months a year in Umbria, Italy where she oversees her guest house [Il Casale di Mele](#).

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