

Italian Recipes -

Bolognese Meat Ragu

This famous Italian sauce from the city of Bologna is actually a "ragù" (similar to the French "ragout"), since all of the ingredients are gradually combined and then simmered in a large saucepan for hours, until the flavors have beautifully melded and a thick sauce is created. Pair this delicious sauce with thick spaghetti or tubular macaroni that has with ridges for the sauce to cling to. For a special dinner, this sauce is wonderful with homemade wide ribbon pasta, such as tagliatelle or pappardelle. And remember, a little sauce goes a long way in Italy - a generous ladle of sauce on top of a nest of pasta in each plate makes a wonderful meal - top with freshly grated Parmesan cheese and enjoy!



Ingredients

(Serves 4 with 1 lb. of pasta)

3 Tbsps. butter (plus more to finish sauce at end if desired)

2 Tbsps. olive oil

½ cup chopped pancetta or ¼ cup chopped bacon

1 medium onion, chopped finely

1 stalk of celery, chopped finely

1 carrot, peeled and chopped finely

¾ cup ground beef

¾ cup ground pork

¼ cup ground Italian sausage (about 1 sausage removed from casing)

¾ cup dry white wine

1 ½ cups beef stock

4 tsps. tomato paste

¼cup whipping cream

*Optional:

¼ lb. cremini mushrooms, quartered and sautéed in 3 Tbsps. olive oil and 1 Tbsp. butter

Procedure

Heat 3 Tbsp. of butter with 2 Tbsps. of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat.

Add the finely chopped onion, celery and carrot and cook with a pinch of salt until vegetables have softened.

Add the chopped pancetta or bacon and cook to render out the fat. Remove meaty parts of bacon.

Add the ground beef, ground pork, and Italian sausage meat, and stir with a wooden spoon to break up meat as it browns.

Add dry white wine and raise heat to high to boil off.

Mix a little of the beef stock with the tomato paste to thin, and then stir into the skillet with the other ingredients.

Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Add ¼ cup of the beef stock and cover the skillet.

Cook over medium-low heat for an additional 1 to 1 ½ hours, stirring intermittently and adding more stock gradually to keep the meat moist.

All the ingredients should come together to form a gravy-like sauce, or ragù.

Optional: While the meat ragù is cooking, quarter and sauté the mushrooms in a separate small frying pan in 1 Tbsp. butter and 3Tbsps. olive oil, and reserve.

To complete the sauce, remove the ragù from the heat, stir in the mushrooms and their juices, and then stir in the whipping cream.

Add additional tablespoons of cream and 1 -2 Tbsps. of butter as desired.

Serve immediately, with a generous ladle of sauce in the center of each plate of pasta.

(Left over sauce can be stored in the refrigerator or for longer periods in the freezer. Add a little water to sauce as needed and reheat over low heat.)

-Adapted from *Primi e Secondi Piatti*, 2nd edition, 2010, courtesy of the Italian American Society of Peoria.

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