

PASTITSIO

Baked Pasta with Meat and Bechamel Topping



Pastitsio is made with pasta, a meat sauce and béchamel sauce for the top. Those three components are put in layers.

Ingredients

one pack of macaroni (either pasta noodles or penne)

For the meat sauce

0.5 kilo ground beef

1 cup olive oil

1 onion (finely chopped)

Parsley

0.5 glass red wine

1 cup tomato sauce or puree

1 cinammon stick

Salt, pepper, nutmeg

Kefalotiri cheese

For the béchamel sauce

6 tablespoons butter

10 tablespoons flour

2 cups milk

Salt, pepper, nutmeg

Preparation

1. First you boil your macaroni in very hot water for about 10 minutes, until they are soft Drain and leave them aside.

For the meat sauce

1. Saute the onion in olive oil and continue with the meat.

2. Cook for about five minutes and add the wine.
3. Allow 2 minutes for the alcohol to evaporate.
4. Add the tomato sauce, parsley, allspice, cinnamon stick, salt, and pepper and allow sauce to simmer over low heat for 10 minutes until all liquid is absorbed. Remove the cinnamon stick.

For the béchamel sauce

1. Melt butter in a saucepan over low heat.
2. Add flour to melted butter whisking continuously and allow to cook for a minute.
3. Add milk to mixture whisking continuously (I use a hand mixer). Add milk little by little until the sauce is thick.
4. Add salt, pepper and a little nutmeg.
5. Simmer over low heat until it is thick. Béchamel needs to be really thick so it stays on top of the baking pan and doesn't fall in the mixture.

When the three components are ready, brush the bottom and sides of a baking pan with olive oil.

1. First layer: spread the bottom with half the pasta noodles.
2. Second layer: add the meat filling.
3. Third layer: top with remaining pasta noodles.
4. Fourth layer: Top with the béchamel sauce to cover the whole pan.
5. Spread some kefalotiri cheese on top.

Bake in pre-heated oven (200 C) for 45 minutes, until béchamel sauce is light brown.

Notes

Pastitsio is a very traditional Greek dish based in spaghetti and ground beef. Kefalotiri cheese with a mild salty flavor is quite popular and it is made with sheep and/or goat's milk. It can be served as a cheese appetizer but it is usually grated and sprinkled on spaghetti. It's ideal for grating and frying.