

Three Day Lasagna Bolognese

Adapted from Anthony Bourdain's *Lasagna Bolognese* — *Appetites* (2016)

by Michelle Schwinghammer | 🗝️ Denver Realtor by Day. 🐱 No nonsense cook by night.

👤 ⏳ 4,320 minutes (minimum) 🍽️ Serves 10 😊 Heavenly 🙌🙌🙌 Three snaps!

A labor of love, patiently (and easily) built over three days. Not only does this approach produce the best lasagna you've ever tasted, it also turns what would be an overwhelming project into something surprisingly easy to make. Just work the two sauces into your regular weeknight/day kitchen tasks two days before, and the whole thing practically comes together on its own. Patience is the secret ingredient at every step. This isn't just dinner, it's a destination you'll want to return to again and again. A perfect Sunday splurge any time of year, and an impressive make-ahead centerpiece for celebrations big and small. Bon appétit!

Ingredients

Bolognese Sauce (Day One)

- 3 tbsp olive oil, divided
- 1 large onion, peeled and finely chopped
- 2 large carrots, finely chopped
- 3 ribs celery, finely chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- ½ tsp fresh thyme leaves
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 8 oz chicken livers, trimmed and finely chopped
- 12 oz ground beef
- 12 oz ground pork
- 12 oz ground veal
- *NOTE: I often use 2.25# ground meat, substituting/omitting based on what I have on hand.*
- 6 oz tomato paste
- 1 cup Tuscan white wine
- 1½ cups whole milk
- 2 bay leaves

Homemade Bechamel Sauce / Cheese / Assembly / First Bake (Day Two)

- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 6 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 quart (4 cups) whole milk
- Salt and white pepper to taste ~ Be generous, see notes
- Pinch of freshly ground nutmeg (optional, but recommended)
- ¾ cup Parmigiano-Reggiano, freshly grated
- 7 oz fresh mozzarella, thinly sliced
- 16 oz dried flat lasagna noodles (uncooked — no pre-boiling needed or recommended)

DAY ONE — Just the Sauce, Boss 🍲

This is the longest, most critical step. It's actually quite easy – but you can't rush it, it takes a long simmer, and don't even think about using an InstantPot. Because the sauce takes as long as it does, making this lasagna to eat during the same day is impossible. Just focus on the sauce alone, giving it the patience it needs, and let it rest overnight. As you build this easy sauce, prepare a separate / easy dinner. Your counter's already messy, right?! Tomorrow the meat sauce will be better than you can imagine.

1. Sauté the vegetables

Heat 2 tbsp olive oil in a large heavy-bottomed pot (Dutch oven works great) over medium-high heat. Add the onion, carrots, celery, garlic, and thyme. Season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring regularly, until the vegetables are tender and have released their juices, 7-9 minutes.

2. Brown the meat

Stir in the chicken livers and cook over high heat for 2 minutes. Then add the beef, veal, and pork. Stir and break up the meats, scraping the bottom regularly to prevent scorching, until everything is fully browned.

3. Add and caramelize the tomato paste

Stir in the tomato paste over medium heat and cook, stirring regularly, for about 20 minutes, letting it deepen and caramelize into the meat.

4. Reduce wine ... then add the milk

Add the wine, bring to a boil, and reduce by half. Then add the milk and bay leaves and return to a boil.

5. Low and slow ... simmer (partially covered)

Reduce heat to a low simmer. Cook for 1½ to 2 hours, partially covered, stirring occasionally. Add a splash of water or chicken stock when gets too thick (it will). Season with salt and pepper, only if necessary, as it cooks.

6. Skim, cool, and refrigerate overnight

Remove the pot from heat. Let cool slightly and discard the bay leaves. Let the sauce cool completely, covered and refrigerated, overnight.

DAY TWO — Make a Bechamel, Build, + Do the First Bake ☒

1. Make the béchamel from scratch (it's super easy, I promise)

Melt the butter, whisk in flour and cook, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, for a few minutes to create a blonde roux. Do not brown. Slowly whisk in warm milk ensuring no lumps form until the mixture is smooth, thick, smooth, and creamy. Reduce the heat to low-medium and cook, stirring regularly, until the sauce thickens enough to coat the back of a wooden spoon (about 10 minutes) Season with salt, white pepper, and a pinch of nutmeg. **Important:** Don't under-season. This is the binding ingredient and needs to do a lot of lifting in the dish. Set aside to cool slightly. This is a huge part of the magic – you'll never go back to ricotta, trust me. :)

2. Prep the cheese and bring Bolognese to room temperature

Retrieve the Bolognese from the fridge. Oil your pan(s) with a little olive oil. Freshly grate the Parmigiano-Reggiano and slice the mozzarella.

3. Pick your vessel(s) and build the pies

This can be made as one huge pie in a regular 9x13 dish; but I prefer making it in two 8x8s instead, to be able to eat one now and freeze one for later. No matter which pan you pick, in each layer as follows: start with béchamel, a sprinkle of Parmigiano-Reggiano, then top with layer of dry noodles (if using 8x8, just break the noodles evenly lengthwise in half), then a ladle of bolognese. Repeat until each pan is full, finishing with bolognese dotted with béchamel. Lay slices of mozzarella across the very top.

4. Pre-bake, *today*. Trust me, this step is important (I was a skeptic too, at first)

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Place pan(s) on a sheet pan lined with foil to catch any drips and bake for about 50 minutes, until the mozzarella is melted and lasagna is bubbling.

5. Nestle the pie(s) into “Second Night’s Rest”.

Remove from oven and allow to cool to room temp. It’ll take a good long while, well over an hour. After, cover/protect as appropriate and refrigerate (or freeze) overnight. By tomorrow, layers will set, flavors will meld, and your soon-to-be dinner will be well worth the patience.

DAY THREE — The Payoff. 😊

1. Patiently reheat the pie.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Remove the cooked lasagna from the fridge. Cover loosely with foil and bake until heated through and bubbling at the edges, 35 to 40 mins+. **Trust your nose here!**

2. Rest and serve, *finally*.

Remove from the oven and rest, uncovered, for at least 20 minutes or so before slicing. While you’re waiting build a simple salad to serve alongside. This is the final act of patience. After, just slice, serve, and enjoy what three days of intention has built. You’ll be AMAZED.

Why three days? Each rest does something distinct. Day 1: Bolognese deepens as fat carries flavor through the sauce. Day 2: the built lasagna sets up, the noodles absorb the sauces, the layers become one cohesive thing. By Day 3, you’re not reheating dinner — you’re arriving at a destination.

The chicken livers: Don’t skip them and don’t tell anyone they’re in there. They’re the secret — an earthy, mineral depth that makes people ask what IS that? in the best possible way.

No boiling the noodles: Dry noodles go in raw. They absorb moisture from the béchamel and Bolognese while baking and come out perfectly al dente every time.

On béchamel: This is not ricotta lasagna (and you'll never go back). The béchamel brings a creaminess and subtlety that transforms the whole dish. Make it fresh on Day 2. It's easy!

The frozen pie: We tend to bring a frozen pie weeks later for camping. To do so, we take it out of the freezer, allow it to thaw overnight, pop into a fridge, then follow the reheating instructions exactly the same way. Your investment in time, pays off huge, later.

ASSEMBLED / PRE-BAKE:



POST FIRST BAKE:

