

Classic Lasagna

1 red bell pepper, coarsely chopped

1 white onion, coarsely chopped

3 cloves of garlic pressed

1 plum tomato

6-8 large black olives

1 teaspoon drained capers, rinsed

2 Tablespoons Italian Seasoning (oregano, basil, thyme, rosemary, onion, parsley, and sage)

1/2 teaspoon ground cumin

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

1 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional)

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 lb. ground beef chuck (10% fat)

3 tablespoons triple concentrate tomato paste

15oz crushed tomatoes

8 oz. dried lasagna noodles

1 lb. ricotta

12 oz. low-moisture mozzarella, coarsely grated (about 3 cups)

Purée bell pepper, onion, garlic, tomato, olives, capers, Italian seasoning, cumin, black pepper, salt, and red pepper flakes (optional) in a blender or food processor until mostly smooth.

Heat oil in a large pot over medium-high. Cook beef, tomato paste, and blended mixture, breaking up meat and stirring often, until liquid is evaporated, and meat is starting to brown, 20–25 minutes. Stir in crushed tomatoes and let simmer on low until lasagna is ready to assemble.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook noodles, stirring often, until very al dente, about 4 minutes (noodles will finish cooking in oven). Drain noodles and stack flat in layers, separated by parchment.

Lightly oil a 13x9" baking dish. Spread a heaping cupful of sauce in dish. Lay a single layer of noodles over sauce. Spread 1 cup sauce over noodles. Season ricotta with salt and pepper; evenly spread half of ricotta over sauce. Scatter one third of mozzarella over top. Repeat layering process. Finish with remaining sauce, followed by remaining mozzarella. Cover with a lightly oiled piece of foil.

Bake lasagna until bubbling around the edges, 40–45 minutes. Increase oven temperature to 425 degrees. Uncover lasagna and continue to bake until top is golden brown, 15–18 minutes more. Let sit 15 minutes before serving.

