

Baked Tomato Spinach Penne Pasta

When I was a kid in the 1970s, we ate pasta every Sunday with my grandparents. Sometimes my mom would make homemade ravioli, everyone's favorite. This pasta bake takes less time to make yet offers the same delicious flavors and comfort of homemade raviolis. Lean ground beef adds extra protein, and jarred sauce saves time on busy weeknights.

MAKES 6 SERVINGS (1 ½ CUPS EACH)
PREPARATION TIME: 50 MINUTES

Ingredients

2 teaspoons olive oil, divided
8 ounces 90% lean ground beef (may use ground turkey)
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 (24-ounce) jar tomato or marinara sauce
2 tablespoons parsley, chopped (optional)
1 pound penne pasta, uncooked
10 ounces frozen loose-leaf or chopped spinach, thawed, drained
8 ounces part skim ricotta cheese
¼ cup Parmesan cheese, finely grated
Black pepper, to taste

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About the Recipe Author

Recipe by Rosanne Rust, a registered dietitian who grew up next door to her Italian grandparents in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but now lives on the Gulf Coast of Florida. Her latest book, *Zero Waste Cooking For Dummies®*, was dedicated to her parents, the king and queen of zero waste.



Instructions

1. Heat a 3-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add 1 teaspoon of the oil and the beef, and cook just until browned. Add garlic, and cook another minute.
2. Add the tomato or marinara sauce and 1 tablespoon of the parsley, if using. Stir, cover, and let simmer on low heat for 15 minutes.
3. While the sauce simmers, preheat the oven to 350°F.
4. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the penne, and cook until al dente (firm to the bite), about 8 minutes. Drain pasta (but do not rinse), and return to the large pot.
5. Pour the meat-tomato sauce over the pasta, and sprinkle with half of the grated parmesan. Add spinach, and stir to combine. Add ricotta cheese, and gently stir into the pasta.
6. Transfer the pasta mixture to a 9 x 13 (or 3-quart) lightly oiled baking dish. Top with the remaining Parmesan cheese and freshly ground pepper to taste.
7. Cover and bake in the oven for 20 minutes. Uncover and bake another 10-15 minutes until golden brown. Garnish with parsley, if using.

Note: To lower sodium, make your own tomato sauce using canned tomato puree and season it yourself with herbs, ground pepper, and a pinch of salt.

Nutritional Analysis (1½ cups serving): 475 calories, 57 g carbohydrate, 4 g fiber, 7 g sugar, 0 g added sugar, 16 g fat, 5 g saturated fat, 102 mg cholesterol, 27 g protein, 749 mg sodium

