

Eggplant Lasagna w/ Hazelnut-Parsley Pesto

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Serves: 8-10 people



WINE PAIRING: TORII MOR 2006 HAWKS VIEW VINEYARD
PINOT NOIR

Ingredients:

For Béchamel

½ cup unsalted butter
3 garlic cloves, minced
½ cup all-purpose flour
5 cups milk
½ cup chopped shallots or onion
1 or 2 bay leaves
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon pepper

For Lasagna

4 lb medium eggplants, cut crosswise into ½-inch-thick rounds
olive oil for brushing
salt and pepper
9 (7- by 3½-inch) oven-ready lasagna noodles (sometimes called "no-boil"; 6 oz)
1 oz finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano (½ cup)

For Pesto and Ricotta Mixture

¾ cup roasted hazelnuts
3 cups loosely packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves
2 oz finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano (1 cup)
2 garlic cloves
2 teaspoons salt
1½ teaspoons pepper
⅔ cup olive oil
1 large egg
1 (15-oz) container part skim ricotta cheese

Make Béchamel: Melt butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add garlic and cook 20 seconds. Whisk in flour and cook 5-7 minutes, whisking frequently. Add milk in a stream, whisking. Add bay leaf and shallots; bring to a boil over moderately high heat, whisking constantly. Reduce heat and simmer, whisking occasionally, until thickened and raw flour taste has cooked out, about 10-15 minutes. Whisk in salt and pepper, then remove from heat and discard bay leaf. Cover surface of sauce with wax paper until ready to use.

Make Pesto and Ricotta Mixture: Purée hazelnuts, parsley, Parmigiano-Reggiano, garlic, olive oil, 1 teaspoon salt, and 1 teaspoon pepper in a food processor until pesto is smooth. Whisk egg in a bowl; stir in ricotta, ¾ of the parsley pesto, and remaining salt and pepper until well combined.

Roast Eggplant for Lasagna: Put oven racks in upper and lower thirds of oven and preheat oven to 450°F. Oil two large baking sheets. Brush eggplant with oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper on both sides. Arrange eggplant in one layer on baking sheets. Bake eggplant, switching position of sheets and turning slices halfway through, until tender, 20 to 25 minutes total.

Assemble Lasagna: Put oven rack in middle position and reduce oven temperature to 425°F. In a 13 x 9 x 2-inch glass or ceramic baking dish (3 quart), spread 1 cup béchamel on bottom and cover with 3 pasta sheets, leaving spaces between sheets. Drop 1 cup ricotta mixture by spoonfuls over pasta, spreading evenly (layer will be thin), then top with one layer of eggplant, cutting to fit if necessary. Repeat two more times creating a total of 3 layers each of béchamel, pasta, ricotta, and eggplant. Spread the remaining cup béchamel and drizzle with remaining ¼ of parsley pesto. Sprinkle Parmigiano-Reggiano evenly over the top. Tightly cover baking dish with foil then set dish on foil-lined sheet pan (to catch drips) and bake lasagna 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake until golden and bubbling, 10 to 15 minutes more. Let lasagna stand 15 minutes before serving.

“Through this Torii Mor, this Earth gate, we step, to make glad the soul, with wine”