



MUSHROOMS

Wild Mushroom Lasagna with Arugula Pesto

Serves 4

Who says you have to make lasagna the traditional way? Here mushrooms rather than tomatoes shine, with arugula pesto providing the perfect piquant accent. The result is a combination of flavors that is both earthy and heady. This is also a fine make-ahead dish: just heat up the desired portion size whenever you need it. Add shredded duck confit between the layers for an even heartier filling.

MUSHROOM FILLING

5 cups Roasted Wild Mushrooms
(see Appendices), finely chopped
3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
3 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

RICOTTA FILLING

2 cups ricotta cheese
1 cup blanched spinach leaves, chopped
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
1 clove garlic, minced
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 pound lasagna noodles, cooked
2 cups grated pecorino Romano cheese
1 pound (2 large bunches) arugula leaves

ARUGULA PESTO

2 cups firmly packed arugula leaves
½ cup firmly packed fresh basil
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 cup grated pecorino Romano cheese
1 cup extra virgin olive oil
½ cup pine nuts, toasted
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

GARNISH

4 teaspoons balsamic vinegar
2 tablespoons chiffonade-cut basil
¼ cup pine nuts, toasted and chopped
2 tablespoons grated pecorino Romano cheese

METHOD

To prepare the mushroom filling: Combine the chopped mushrooms, vinegar, olive oil, and basil. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

To prepare the ricotta filling: Combine the ricotta, spinach, vinegar, and garlic. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

To prepare the lasagna: Preheat the oven to 375°F. Lightly oil an 8-inch-square lasagna pan. Arrange a layer of the lasagna noodles on the bottom of the pan (trim the noodles as necessary to fit). Then begin layering by spreading a layer of the mushroom filling, sprinkling with some of the pecorino Romano, adding a layer of arugula leaves, and spreading some of the ricotta filling over the arugula. Top with a second layer of the lasagna noodles. Continue this process, ultimately using half of the pecorino Romano and all of the other components, to make 6 layers of pasta and 5 layers of filling. Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 45 minutes. Remove the cover and sprinkle with the remaining 1 cup pecorino Romano. Continue to bake for 10 to 15 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and lightly golden brown. Remove the lasagna from the oven and let rest for 15 minutes before serving.

To prepare the arugula pesto: Purée the arugula, basil, garlic, pecorino Romano, olive oil, and pine nuts in a blender until smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper. If the purée is too thick to spoon around the plate, thin it with a little water or more olive oil. The pesto can be used at room temperature or warmed slightly just prior to use.

ASSEMBLY

Place a 4-inch-square piece of the lasagna in the center of each plate and spoon the arugula pesto and balsamic vinegar around the lasagna. Sprinkle with the basil, pine nuts, and cheese.

WINE NOTES

The layers of cheese and mushrooms in the lasagna could match with red wines, but the addition of the arugula pesto makes reds taste unbalanced and off-key. The perfect note is a lightly oaked, higher-acid, mineral California Chardonnay. The Calcaire Vineyard Chardonnay by Clos du Bois handles the green flavors of the pesto and has a bright acidity that cuts through the weighty richness of the lasagna.