



THE WAY THE COOKIE CRUMBLES

A FOOD BLOG

Chicken, Mushroom and Spinach Alfredo Lasagna (adapted from Emeril Lagasse)

This is how I made the lasagna, but there are some things you could do differently. The original recipe keeps the chicken and some of the parmesan separate from the béchamel, laying pasta-béchamel-cheese-chicken instead of just alternating pasta and chickeny parmesany béchamel, like I did.

Also, the type of pasta you use is entirely up to you. You could use the no-cook dry noodles or buy fresh noodles or make your own. And I don't know for sure that fresh homemade noodles need to be blanched for lasagna, but the one time I skipped that step was a disaster.

One more thing – the original recipes calls for double these ingredients to be layered into a 9- by 13-inch pan, but I was concerned that I'd have overflow. While my lasagna is a little on the short side, I think twice this height would have been too much for my standard 9- by 13-inch pan. But maybe the quantity of ingredients that I used would make an ideal 8- by 8-inch lasagna?

6 to 8 servings

1 teaspoon vegetable oil
1 pound chicken breasts, bone-in, skin-on, trimmed of excess fat and skin
salt and pepper
4 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter
8 ounces button mushrooms, thinly sliced
2 large shallots, finely chopped
4 cloves minced garlic
¼ cup all-purpose flour
3½ cups milk
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
4 ounces spinach, stemmed, washed, sliced into ¼-inch ribbons
3 ounces (1½ cups) grated Parmesan, divided
fresh lasagna noodles (1 egg + ⅔ cup (3.2 ounces) flour, rolled to the next-to-thinnest setting on a pasta roller, blanched)

1. (Optional) Stir 2 tablespoons salt into 2 cups cold water until it dissolves. Add the chicken; refrigerate for 30 minutes, then remove the chicken from the brine and pat it dry.

2. Adjust an oven rack to the middle-low position and heat the oven to 450°F. Heat a small oven-safe skillet over medium-high heat. Add the oil and swirl to coat the bottom of the pan; place the chicken breast in the pan skin-side down. Cook without moving until well-browned, about 5 minutes. Turn the chicken over and move the pan to the oven. Roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the chicken measures 160°F or the juices run clear when small cut is made in the chicken. Remove the pan from the oven and set aside. When the chicken has cooled enough to handle, remove and discard the skin (or eat it, because it's crisp and delicious!) and shred the meat with your fingers or two forks. Decrease the oven temperature to 375°F.

3. Melt the butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the mushrooms and cook, stirring often, until their liquid has evaporated and the mushrooms are slightly browned, about 5 to 7 minutes. Add the shallots to the pan and sauté until soft and translucent, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in the garlic and sauté for about 30 seconds, until fragrant. Add the flour and cook, stirring with a wooden spoon, to make a light roux, about 1 minute. Whisking constantly, slowly add the milk and continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until thickened, 5 minutes. Add $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon of the salt, the pepper, nutmeg, spinach and $2\frac{1}{2}$ ounces ($1\frac{1}{4}$ cups) of the Parmesan and cook, stirring, until thickened, about 2 minutes, then add the shredded chicken. Taste the sauce to decide if it needs more salt. Remove the béchamel from the heat and place a piece of plastic wrap directly on the surface until ready to assemble the lasagna.

4. Spray a 9 by 13-inch pan with nonstick spray, and spread about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the béchamel sauce on the bottom of the dish, avoiding any large chunks of chicken. Arrange a single layer of noodles evenly over the sauce. Then alternate layering béchamel and noodles until you run out of noodles – I was able to make 4 layers, I believe. End with the remaining béchamel and sprinkle the top with the remaining parmesan.

5. Cover the pan with aluminum foil and bake for 20 minutes. Remove the foil and continue baking for about 20 minutes, until bubbly. Let the lasagna rest for about 10 minutes before slicing and serving.