

Heather's Ratatouille

As with many comfort or “country” recipes, there are many iterations of ratatouille. This is my adaptation of this heart warming classic, but styled after Remy’s beautiful version from the movie “Ratatouille” (one of my favorite Pixar films).

Prep Time: 15-20 min. Cook Time: approx. 60 min.

Ingredients:

1-2 cups tomato sauce (can use a jar of basil tomato sauce, or you can refer to my recipe below and make your own; it’s very quick and simple)

2-3 medium/ large cloves of garlic

2 tsp of dried thyme

2 T. extra virgin olive oil (can use regular olive oil, or a flavorless oil if you like; but extra virgin olive oil has a peppery flavor that works really well here.)

½ tsp. (good pinch) chili flakes

1 medium sized eggplant (though very traditional, this ingredient can be left out. Personally, I never use it, as I strongly dislike eggplant)

1 yellow squash

1 zucchini

1 red bell pepper

1 orange bell pepper

2 medium or 3 small red potatoes

Sea salt (or any salt) and black pepper

Non-stick spray

****Tip** – All vegetables mentioned above should be thinly sliced.

Béchamel Sauce Ingredients:

1 T. unsalted butter or ghee

1 T. Flour or Cup4Cup (gf option)

1 c. milk, or plain coconut milk or plain almond milk

¼ tsp. of nutmeg, fresh grated if you have it.

****Note:** Even though it is traditional to use a béchamel sauce, and not a mornay, I admittedly change the “rules” on this one when I make it, and grate some fresh parmesan into the béchamel (which is also not the traditional cheese for mornay sauce, so I’m breaking ALL the rules here!). I love the extra bit of depth this gives to the flavor. But, obviously, you can stick to the béchamel version if you like.

Tomato Sauce Recipe:

Into a small saucepan add one 6 oz. can of tomato paste. To the tomato paste add 1-1 ½ cups of water (to your desired thickness). Stirring over medium high heat, bring the tomato sauce to a simmer and add a large pinch of salt, a few cracks of

black pepper (or approximately ½ tsp. of each), 1 tsp. of onion powder, ½ tsp. of garlic powder OR 2 medium cloves minced or grated, ¼ tsp. of sage (not essential if you don't have any), 2 tsp. of paprika, a good pinch of chili flake, 2 tsp. dried Thyme, 2 rounded tsp. of dried Basil, and 2 T. extra virgin olive oil. Mix well and simmer for 4-5 minutes. Then remove from heat to cool.

Directions:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Boil the sliced potatoes until fork tender. Drain and set aside.

Thinly slice all remaining vegetables.

Using a small saucepan, drop in a tablespoon of butter and let it melt. Add in a tablespoon of flour, and cook for about a minute, stirring constantly. At this point whisk in the milk approximately 1/3 c. at a time (1 cup total), until well combined. Keep whisking until sauce thickens, and coats the back of a spoon. At this point, add in the salt, pepper, nutmeg, and if you like, the Parmesan cheese (approx. ¼ cup). Stir to mix thoroughly, and set aside.

Into a sprayed pie dish, pour approximately a cup of tomato sauce, which should include the garlic, thyme, chili flake, and oil from the ingredient list -> **UNLESS** you used my tomato sauce recipe above, in which case, disregard this instruction, as my sauce already contains these ingredients. Next drizzle over the tomato sauce with some béchamel sauce (but save some back). Take a spoon and swirl the sauces together. Then, begin layering in the sliced vegetables. You can do this any way you like, but I like to stand them on end and make concentric circles toward the center, a la Remy's version.

Once you have all of the vegetables arranged in your pie dish, you can pour over the remainder of the béchamel sauce.

Loosely cover with a piece of either foil or parchment paper, and place into a preheated oven for 60 minutes.

****Note** – you may want to place the pie dish onto a cookie sheet while cooking, as the sauce may bubble over the edges.