

BEEF LOMBARDI

INGREDIENTS:

1 pound (16oz) ground beef or Impossible Burger or equivalent
1 28oz (or two 14oz) can petite diced tomatoes with liquid
2 cloves minced garlic
2 tsp honey
2 tsp salt
black pepper
½ tsp Tabasco (or your preferred brand hot) sauce
1 bay leaf
1 (16 oz) pkg wide egg noodles, cooked al dente and drained well
1 8oz pkg cream cheese at room temperature
6 green onions, chopped
1 cup (8 oz) sour cream at room temperature
3 cups grated Cheddar cheese, colby jack or similar – your choice
Optional: 1 8oz can sliced mushrooms, drained
Optional: 1 4oz can diced green chiles, preferred heat level

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Brown beef over medium heat. Drain fat if necessary.
2. Add garlic and cook until soft. Be careful not to overcook/burn.
3. Add tomatoes, honey, salt, pepper, bay leaf and Tabasco.
4. Lower the heat to simmer for 30 minutes.
5. Thoroughly combine the cooked noodles with the cream cheese, green onions and sour cream.
6. Spray with non-stick spray a 9" X 13" pan and alternately layer noodle mixture, meat/tomato mixture and grated cheese, ending with the cheese on top. So, noodles, meat, cheese, noodles, meat cheese.
7. Bake covered, in a preheated 350 degree oven for 30 - 40 minutes or until heated through and bubbly. May remove cover and bake for a few minutes more to make sure cheese is thoroughly melted. Can also add more cheese to the top near the end, if desired.
8. You can freeze this before or after baking

TIPS:

Don't overcook noodles as they will continue to cook when you bake casserole.

Bay leaf and honey are not essential to this recipe, so if you don't have them on hand, that's okay.

I added a little more (2 tsp) hot sauce than the recipe calls for. Adjust to your taste preference.

This recipe is very flexible, so feel free to adjust it accordingly. For example, you can easily make this a Mexican-style casserole by adding a package of taco seasoning to the beef.

Beef substitutes like Impossible or Beyond are expensive, but I've found them at Costco (Impossible) and Sam's (Beyond) for half or less than what they cost at Sprout's or other stores. Sometimes you may have to buy it in the 1/4-pound patties, but just use 4 of them to make the equivalent of 1 pound of bulk burger.

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