

KID-FRIENDLY BAKED ZITI WITH SAUSAGE

Serves 4 to 6 and takes about 30 minutes to make.

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 pound Italian sausage, cut into 1/2-inch pieces (can use sweet or hot, but I use sweet)
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes
salt
1 pound ziti or penne
2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese (I just use the stuff by Kraft in the green bottle)
2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley (a nice splash of color, but optional)

1. Bring 4 quarts water to boil in large pot. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Brush 13- by 9-inch baking dish with 1 tablespoon oil. Cook sausage in large skillet over medium heat until browned, 5 to 6 minutes. Transfer sausage to bowl.
2. Drain all but 1 tablespoon fat from skillet, add remaining 1 tablespoon oil and garlic, and cook until fragrant but not brown, about 1 minute. Add crushed and diced tomatoes, return sausage to skillet, and simmer until thickened, 15 to 18 minutes. Season with salt to taste.
3. Meanwhile, add 1 tablespoon salt and pasta to boiling water. Cook until slightly underdone. Reserve 1/4 cup cooking water, drain pasta, and return to pot along with reserved water. Stir in tomato sauce.
4. Pour half of pasta into prepared baking dish. Sprinkle with half of each cheese. Pour remaining pasta into dish, sprinkle with remaining cheese, and sprinkle with parsley. Bake until golden brown, about 20 minutes. Remove from oven and let rest for 5 minutes or it will be runny. Serve.