



I've already mentioned [my love of lasagne](#) but [after seeing Our Daily Bread recently](#) I decided that while I'm not going to go veggie again (I was a very unhealthy veggie for latter half of my teens) I do want to eat less meat. So I wanted to come up with a vegetarian version of lasagne and the thing I wanted most was for it to taste reasonably similar to the meat version. So I wanted the filling to be have a lovely rich tomato taste with a meaty consistency. Amazingly (and unusual for me) I was very happy with my first attempt.

And this isn't just healthier it's also quicker to make than the meat version too.

I used mushrooms and olives to give the filling the meaty texture. I added sun-dried tomatoes to add in that rasher-like saltyness and also to sharpen the tomato taste. Sun-dried tomatoes can sometimes overpower whatever they are in so check first of all that you really love the taste of the ones you buy.



The way I make Vegetarian Lasagne is Ingredients:

Serves 4

- 1 tin green/brown lentils, well drained
- 8 - 10 field mushrooms, diced small
- 1 small jar (about 100g drained) pitted black olives, minced
- 80g (more or less) sundried tomatoes, minced
- 1 large carrot, finely chopped
- 2 celery sticks, finely chopped
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 tsp dried basil
- 1 tsp dried oregano

- 3 - 4 dessertspoons tomato purée
- 1 - 2 tbsp soy sauce
- olive oil

For the béchamel sauce:

- 50g salted butter
 - 2 tbsp plain flour
 - good pinch freshly grated nutmeg
 - 1 pint whole milk
 - tiny pinch ground allspice
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- sheets of pasta for lasagne (*no-need-to-pre-cook type*)
 - grated mozzarella
 - grated Parmesan (or Grana Padano)

Instructions:

1. The filling is made fairly quickly so it's best to start off by making the béchamel sauce first: Melt the butter on a gentle heat in another saucepan. It's important not to burn the sauce so don't let it sizzle. When the butter has fully melted stir in the flour, nutmeg and allspice. Stir it around for a couple of minutes making sure that the flour is completely cooked otherwise the sauce will taste floury. Add a little milk and keep stirring it around till it has fully blended in with the flour and butter. Keep doing this until you have eventually blended in the full pint of milk. When you have about a third of the milk added you can turn up the heat and add the milk in more quickly, keep stirring to avoid it forming lumps.

2. Leave the sauce aside and in another saucepan heat a little olive oil. Add the carrot, celery and onion. Season with a little salt and pepper. Cover the pan and leave them to sweat gently for about 5 minutes.

3. Stir in the herbs. Add the mushrooms, cover and leave for 5 minutes.

4. To mince the olives, put them in a blender and add the sun-dried tomatoes and pulse them till they are "minced" (same as making a tapenade). If the mix seems a little dry add a tablespoon of olive oil.

5. Stir the olives and sun-dried tomatoes into the mix in the pan.

6. Add in the lentils, tomato purée and soy sauce. Taste and add more tomato purée and seasoning if necessary.

7. Cover the pan, remove from the heat and leave aside while you grease your oven dish.

8. Add some of the white sauce to the bottom of the dish. Layer a single layer of pasta sheets over this, spoon half of the lentil mix over this, layer again with the pasta, spoon over the rest of the lentil mix, add a final layer of pasta sheets. Because the lentil mix is not that wet

push the layer down close together. Pour the white sauce over the final layer. It should be a good thick layer of sauce and sprinkle this with a little grated mozzarella and grated Parmesan.

9. Bake in an oven for 40 - 60 minutes at 180°C/ 350°F/ Gas Mark 4.