

WINTER GREENS PASTA BAKE WITH BÉCHAMEL SAUCE

Season: Winter
From the garden: Garlic, cavolo nero or other winter greens
Type: Main
Difficulty: Easy
Serves: 10-12 adults as a side dish/24 tastes
Source: Joanne Harland, using Stephanie Alexander's *The Cook's Companion* béchamel sauce

Equipment

- Chopping board
- Chef's knife
- Medium saucepan
- Large saucepan with lid
- Measuring jug and measuring spoons
- Mixing spoons
- Colander
- Ceramic or fine grater (for the whole nutmeg)
- Large casserole dish/roasting pan x2

Ingredients

- Large bunch of cavolo nero, kale, silver beet, and/or spinach – any combination
- 1kg dry short pasta (spiral or penne)
- 8 cloves of garlic
- 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- 1.2 litres of milk
- 120g butter
- 120g flour
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg (can be pre-ground or grated from a whole nutmeg)
- 200g dried breadcrumbs (optional)

How to make it

1. Preheat the oven to 180 degrees.
2. Fill a large saucepan 2/3 full with water and a sprinkle of salt. Put the saucepan on the cooktop over high heat to bring to the boil. Once the water is boiling, carefully add the pasta and set the timer to finish 4 minutes before the pasta will be cooked (using the time on the pasta packet as a guide).
3. Wash the cavolo nero and kale and gently dry. Fold the leaves in half then roughly chop.
4. Wash the silver beet and gently dry. Trim the stalks away from the leaves and chop into small pieces. Then fold the leaves in half and roughly chop.
5. When the timer goes, add the chopped cavolo nero, kale and silver beet leaves and 2 whole garlic cloves to the boiling water with the pasta and cook until bright green. This should take 3-4 minutes.
6. Strain the winter greens and pasta (ask an adult to help you with this) and then spread the mixture between the 2 large casserole dishes.
7. Meanwhile, peel the remaining garlic cloves (6) and crush.
8. Heat some olive oil in a saucepan and sauté the chopped silver beet stems and crushed garlic cloves for 5 minutes or until soft. Mix through the drained pasta and winter greens until even spread throughout.

Make the Béchamel sauce:

Winter Greens Pasta Bake with Béchamel Sauce

9. Measure milk and pour into a small saucepan. Heat over medium heat to scalding point (just before boiling) and set aside.
10. Meanwhile, melt butter in a medium saucepan and stir in flour. Cook, stirring all the time, until you have a smooth golden paste. This is known as a "roux".
11. Gradually add the hot milk to the roux and stir until it thickens and is very smooth. Continue stirring until sauce boils. Reduce heat to low and cook for a further 10 minutes. Add salt, pepper and freshly grated nutmeg (if using).

Assemble the Pasta Bake:

12. Pour the béchamel sauce over the pasta mix and then scatter with breadcrumbs (if using). Put casserole dishes in the oven for 20-30 minutes and bake until bubbling and golden.

Notes:

- The creamy white sauce is a perfect match for the winter greens in this recipe. You can use cavolo nero, kale, silver beet, spinach or a combination. You could also try adding herbs from the garden for flavour – these would be added to the pasta after it has been boiled.
- To save time, have some students prepare the winter greens and pasta, while others are making the béchamel sauce. Don't forget you need to get this in the oven at least 30 minutes before you plan to sit down to eat.
- A "roux" is a French word that refers to a paste made out of butter and flour. A roux is the base of many sauces such as this traditional white sauce known as "béchamel". Béchamel sauce is one of the key sauces in lasagne.

Skills:

- Boiling, chopping, straining, sautéing, measuring, stirring
- * Strain – to remove liquid from food by passing through a colander or sieve