Baked Tomato Spaghetti Nests

Twelve muffin-sized spaghetti nests; three meal portions of four · Active 35 min · Total 1 hr 50 min

Skills: Reducing a sauce, portioning pasta into a stated muffin pan and checking a set egg center

Ingredients

• 2 tablespoons olive or neutral oil (30 ml), divided:15 ml for sauce and 15 ml for muffin pan

• 1 small onion, finely chopped (100 g)

• 1 can chopped tomatoes, 14–14 1/2 oz/400–411 g, including juice

• 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano (0.5 g)

• 1/4 teaspoon fine salt (1.5 g)

• 1/4 teaspoon black pepper (0.5 g)

• 5 1/3 oz dry spaghetti (150 g)

• About 8 cups water for pasta (2 L), or package-specified amount

• 2 large eggs, beaten

• 3/4 cup grated cheddar (80 g), divided equally between mixture and tops

Set out

Twelve-hole standard muffin pan, each cavity at least 1/2 cup/120 ml, Baking paper strips if needed, Saucepan for pasta, Wide skillet for sauce, about 10 inches/25 cm across, Mixing bowl, Fork and spoon, Food thermometer, Wire rack

Allergens

wheat, egg, milk. Check labels and substitutions.

Ingredient labels

Spaghetti supplies wheat, eggs bind the cups and cheddar supplies milk. Read actual pasta and cheese labels for additional ingredients.

Make it

1. Heat 15 ml oil in the skillet over medium heat. Cook onion for 7–8 minutes. Add tomatoes with juice, oregano, salt and pepper. Simmer uncovered for 18–25 minutes, stirring, until reduced to a very thick coating, about 1 cup/250 g including onion. Remove and cool for 10 minutes until warm rather than hot.

2. Meanwhile cook spaghetti according to its package in boiling water until tender. Drain well, spread briefly in the mixing bowl and let steam escape. Heat oven to 375°F/190°C. Grease all 12 muffin cavities well with the remaining 15 ml oil and add short paper lifting strips if needed.

3. Combine warm pasta and warm tomato sauce with beaten eggs and 40 g cheddar. Mix evenly. Divide among 12 cavities, gently twirling with a fork and supporting with a spoon; keep each no more than about three-quarters full. Share any remaining egg mixture evenly and top with the remaining 40 g cheese.

4. Bake for 22–28 minutes until the centers are set and each reaches 165°F/74°C. Tops should be golden with no fluid egg mixture inside. If the cheese colors early, cover loosely with foil and continue until the centers are ready.

5. Rest in the pan for 5 minutes. Ease out carefully onto the rack, supporting loose pasta loops with a spoon. Serve 4 nests per person, or cool later portions promptly in a shallow layer.

Count four per meal before storing

Pack the cooked cups in three groups of four so the final portion does not become whatever is left after small snacks have been taken.

A useful detail

Sauce reduction, a brief warm cooling stage before egg, muffin-pan filling and a settling rest are included in the 110-minute total. This is not a way to fit an entire standard large pasta packet into 12 cavities.

Keep it well

Refrigerate shallow portions within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C, at 40°F/4°C or below and use within 3 days. Reheat a portion to 165°F/74°C throughout. Freeze promptly cooled nests for up to 1 month with paper between portions; thaw in the refrigerator before reheating. Keep any separately prepared salad or sauce within its own storage window.