Beef and Aubergine Pasta Bake

4 pasta-bake portions · Active 30 min · Total 1 hr 5 min

Skills: Intermediate

Ingredients

- 1 medium aubergine, cut into 3/4-inch cubes (350 g)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (15 ml), divided
- 1/2 teaspoon fine salt, divided
- 8 oz short pasta such as rigatoni (225 g)
- 12 oz lean ground beef (340 g)
- 1 small onion, finely chopped (100 g)
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 can crushed tomatoes (14 oz/400 g)
- 1/4 cup reserved pasta water (60 ml), as needed
- 1 cup grated mozzarella (100 g)
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

Set out

Conventional oven, Rimmed roasting tray, Saucepan, Large skillet, 8-by-8-inch baking dish, Food thermometer

Allergens

Wheat, Milk. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Heat the oven to 425°F/220°C. Toss aubergine with 2 teaspoons oil and half the salt. Roast for 22–25 minutes, turning once, until soft and browned.

2. Cook pasta according to its package until just tender. Reserve 1/4 cup cooking water, then drain.

3. Meanwhile, heat remaining oil in the skillet. Cook beef and onion over medium-high for 7–8 minutes, breaking up the beef and checking it reaches 160°F/71°C. Add garlic and oregano for 30 seconds.

4. Add tomatoes, remaining salt and black pepper. Simmer for 10 minutes. Fold in pasta and roasted aubergine, adding reserved water if needed to keep the sauce moist.

5. Transfer to the baking dish and top with mozzarella. Bake at 400°F/200°C for 15 minutes until bubbling and the center reaches 165°F/74°C. Rest for 5 minutes before portioning.

A useful freezer shape

Cool portions promptly before freezing in flat, shallow containers. A compact square thaws in the refrigerator and reheats more evenly than a very deep block. Label the dish and date before stacking it among similar-looking meals.

A useful detail

Ground beef and aubergine are cooked before assembly. This keeps the final oven time predictable and makes the dish easier to check.

Keep it well

Refrigerate portions in shallow containers within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C, at 40°F/4°C or below for up to 3 days, or freeze for up to 2 months. Reheat covered to 165°F/74°C, stirring or turning the portion as practical.