Tofu Bolognese Pasta Bake

4 pasta-bake meals, each with one-quarter of the tofu sauce, pasta and cheese · Active 55 min · Total 2 hr 15 min

Skills: Beginner with ordinary kitchen equipment

Ingredients

- Plain firm calcium-set tofu, drained and crumbled (600 g before patting dry)
- 8 1/2 oz dry short pasta, such as penne (240 g)
- About 12 cups water for pasta (3 liters)
- 2 cans crushed tomatoes with juice (800 g total)
- 1 large onion, finely diced (150 g)
- 2 medium carrots, finely diced (150 g prepared)
- 2 garlic cloves, minced (6 g)
- 4 teaspoons olive oil (20 ml/about 18 g), divided
- About 1 cup loosely grated whole-milk mozzarella (120 g)
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano (2 g)
- 1 teaspoon fine salt (6 g), divided
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper (1 g)

Set out

3-liter/about 3-quart baking dish, around 8 by 12 by 2 inches/20 by 30 by 5 cm, 30 cm/12-inch nonstick skillet, Large saucepan for pasta, Colander, Clean bowl for browned tofu, Spoon, Clean towel, Knife and board, Grater, Kitchen scale, Food thermometer, Oven mitts, 4 shallow storage containers

Allergens

Soy, Wheat, Milk; check pasta for egg or other added allergens. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Heat the oven to 375°F/190°C. Drain and weigh tofu, pat dry and crumble into small irregular pieces. Heat 1 teaspoon/5 ml oil in the wide nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Cook half the tofu for 8–10 minutes until moisture evaporates and a few edges turn golden. Transfer to a clean bowl and repeat with another teaspoon/5 ml oil and remaining tofu.

2. Lower heat to medium and add the remaining 2 teaspoons/10 ml oil. Cook onion and carrot for 9–11 minutes until softened. Add garlic and oregano for 30 seconds. Return tofu, add tomatoes, pepper and half the salt, and simmer uncovered for 15–20 minutes until thick but still moist enough to coat pasta. Follow any longer tofu product cooking instruction.

3. Meanwhile bring pasta water and remaining salt to a boil. Add pasta and cook until about 2 minutes short of its packet's full tender time. Reserve 1/2 cup/120 ml cooking water, then drain.

4. Fold pasta into the tofu sauce, adding a little reserved water if it is too stiff to coat evenly. Put all contents in the 3-liter dish and sprinkle with all measured mozzarella. Bake for 20–25 minutes until bubbling and the center reaches 165°F/74°C.

5. Rest for 5 minutes, then divide into 4 equal portions. Serve now or transfer planned later meals promptly into shallow containers for cooling.

A useful kitchen skill

Dry crumbled tofu in separate batches and keep a baked-pasta sauce moist enough to finish slightly undercooked pasta.

A useful detail

The 135-minute total includes two tofu batches, vegetable softening, sauce reduction, pasta, assembly and baking. The estimate uses plain firm calcium-set tofu and dry enriched pasta; silken or extra-dense tofu products are different composition choices.

Keep it well

Divide leftovers promptly into shallow containers, no more than about 2 inches/5 cm food depth, and refrigerate at 40°F/4°C or below within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C. Do not wait for a deep pot or dish to cool on the counter. Use within 3 days. Once chilled, seal and freeze at 0°F/−18°C for up to 2 months for quality. Thaw in the refrigerator and reheat the needed portion to 165°F/74°C throughout, with a small splash of water if dry. Pasta softens further after freezing.