

Penne a La Vodka Casserole

Adapted from Emeril Lagasse

- 2-3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 pound sweet Italian sausage, cut crosswise into 1-inch slices
- 1 pound hot Italian sausage, cut crosswise into 1-inch slices
- 4 cups thinly sliced onions
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced fresh basil leaves
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1/2 cup vodka
- 2 (16-ounce) cans crushed whole tomatoes, with their juice
- 1 teaspoon Essence
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 pound penne pasta
- 15 ounces ricotta
- 1 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
- 1 1/2 cups grated mozzarella

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

Cook sausages in a little bit of olive oil (1 tbsp), stirring, until brown, about 4-5 minutes. Add the onions, salt and pepper to taste. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are just soft, about 4 minutes. Add the basil and garlic, and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes. Add the vodka and tomatoes; reduce the heat to medium-low, and simmer, uncovered, stirring occasionally, for 40 minutes. Add the Essence and heavy cream, stir to mix, and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat. Cook pasta according to package directions. Remove from the heat and drain well. Combine half of the ricotta cheese and half of the Parmigiano-Reggiano with the remaining 1-2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil in a large mixing bowl. Add the pasta and toss to coat evenly. Add the sausage mixture and mix well. Add the remaining ricotta cheese and the remaining Parmigiano-Reggiano and mix well.

Transfer the mixture to a 9 by 13-inch baking dish. Sprinkle with the mozzarella. Bake until bubbly and golden, about 45 minutes. Remove from the oven. Serve warm with crusty bread.