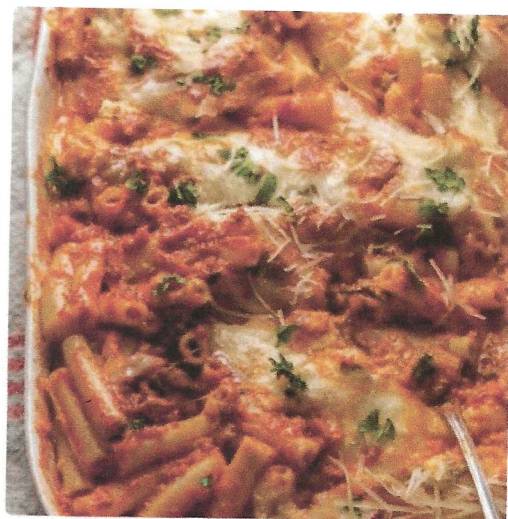


# Best Ever Baked Ziti Recipe

Ashley Manila

My Best Ever Baked Ziti Recipe serves a crowd and is sure to receive rave reviews! Today I'm spilling my secrets on how to master this classic pasta dish and make it better than you ever have before. Including how to achieve perfectly cooked noodles, make delicious homemade sauce, get golden brown gooey cheese pockets, and so much more.

★★★★★ 5 from 10 votes



PREP TIME

30 mins

COOK TIME

1 hr 30 mins

TOTAL TIME

2 hrs



COURSE

Dinner

CUISINE

Italian



SERVINGS

1 Pan (9x13)

## Ingredients

### For the Sauce:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, finely diced
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 pound 85% lean ground beef
- 1 pound Italian sausage
- 3 Tablespoons tomato paste
- 1/2 cup red wine (or beef broth)
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
- 2 (28 ounce) cans crushed tomatoes
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, add more to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper, add more to taste
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup fresh basil, chopped
- 3 Tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped

### **For the Ricotta Mixture:**

- 15 ounces ricotta cheese
- 1/2 cup finely grated parmesan cheese
- 5 ounces fontina cheese, grated
- 1 large egg plus 1 egg yolk
- 2 Tablespoons parsley, finely chopped
- 2 Tablespoons basil, finely chopped
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

### **For the Baked Ziti:**

- 1 pound ziti noodles (or penne)
- 4 ounces low-moisture mozzarella cheese, finely shredded
- 4 ounces Fontina cheese, cut into small cubes
- 1 Tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped, for serving

## ***Instructions***

### **For the Sauce:**

1. Warm the oil a large saucepan over medium heat. Add in the onion and cook until softened, about 6 to 8 minutes.
2. Add in the garlic and crushed chili flakes and cook for another minute, or until fragrant.
3. Add in the beef and sausage and, using a wooden spoon, break the meat up into pieces. Cook until meat is browned and no pink remains, about 5 minutes. Drain out half of the fat, leaving half behind for flavor.
4. Stir in the tomato paste. Then add in the wine and stir to combine. Cook for 5 minutes. Then stir in the Italian seasoning, crushed tomatoes, salt, and pepper, stirring well to combine.
5. Bring sauce to a boil, then reduce to medium-low and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 45 minutes.
6. Stir in the sugar, basil, and parsley and cook for another 15 minutes. Taste and add salt and pepper as needed.
7. Remove from heat allow to slightly cool before using it in the baked ziti. Sauce can be made up to 3 days in advance and stored in the fridge until needed.

### **For the Ricotta Mixture:**

1. In a large bowl, combine the ricotta cheese, parmesan cheese, fontina cheese, parsley, basil, egg, egg yolk, salt and pepper. Stir together until just smooth. Set aside until needed.

### **Assembling and Baking the Baked Ziti:**

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees (F). Spray a 9x13-inch baking dish with nonstick cooking spray and set aside.

2. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Once boiling, add 1 teaspoon of salt, then add in the ziti and cook for exactly 4 minutes. The pasta will still be very hard. Drain the pasta and quickly run it under cold water to stop the cooking.
3. Pour the pasta back into a large bowl, then stir in 1 and 1/2 cups of the meat sauce. Set aside.
4. Spread 1 cup of meat sauce onto the bottom of the prepared baking dish. Then spoon 1/2 of the ricotta mixture on top of the sauce, dropping it in random spoonfuls all over the sauce.
5. Pour the pasta on top of this mixture. Then pour the rest of the sauce over the pasta.
6. Evenly dot the remaining ricotta cheese over the pasta. Sprinkle on the shredded mozzarella and cubed fontina cheeses. ***At this point you can bake as directed blow, or cover tightly and refrigerate for up to 24 hours before baking or freeze for up to 2 months before baking.***
7. Bake for 30 minutes or until cheese is melted and bubbling. If you want extra crispy/golden cheese, turn on the broiler for 30 seconds to 1 minute before removing the baked ziti from the oven.
8. Garnish with a sprinkle of fresh parsley and serve warm!



*Tried it and loved it?*

Snap a picture and share it with me on Instagram @Bakerbynature and by using the hashtag #BakerByNature

Recipe by Ashley Manila at Baker by Nature: <https://bakerbynature.com/best-ever-baked-ziti-recipe/>