

K's Kitchen: Mushroom lasagna perfect for guests

By Kathryn Reed

My sister, Pam, just rolled her eyes when I told her she was going to be helping me with a new recipe. She's rather used to being put to work in the kitchen when she visits as well as a guinea pig of sorts. And it didn't matter that we were spending the weekend celebrating her birthday.



The recipe below, from the October 2013 issue of *Sunset* magazine, is a definite keeper. It is hearty enough that the three meat eaters at the table didn't leave anything on their plate and two of them had seconds. It also stands up to having a full-bodied red wine as a complement.

There were several moving parts, so it was nice to have another pair of hands in the kitchen. But much of it can also be made ahead of time, so if you were to make this for a group or for people who aren't into helping, that would be a way to take away some potential stress.

We put in more garlic than it calls for. Pam and I believe garlic is a food group. And we only used one leek because that's all I bought. I'm not sure another would have made much of a difference.

All of the flavors come together without one being too dominant. It is a definite recipe for the mushroom lovers at your table.

Mushroom and Fresh Herb Lasagna

12 no-boil lasagna noodles ($\frac{1}{2}$ pound)

1 quart milk

$\frac{1}{2}$ C unsalted butter

$\frac{1}{2}$ C flour

About $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp kosher salt

About $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp pepper

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp nutmeg

3 garlic cloves, minced

3 T chopped parsley, divided

1 T chopped fresh thyme leaves, divided

About 3 T olive oil, divided

2 medium leeks, sliced into thin rings

$1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds portabella mushrooms, sliced

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound shiitake mushrooms, stemmed and sliced

1 C finely shredded Parmesan cheese

1 C plus 2 T coarsely shredded Asiago cheese

Soften noodles in a pan of very hot water while you prep the other ingredients.

Make béchamel (white sauce): Bring milk to a simmer in a saucepan and remove from heat. Melt butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add flour and cook, stirring, until slightly darkened, 2 minutes. Whisk milk into flour mixture all at once and whisk until smooth. Add $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. pepper, and the nutmeg. Sauce should be thick enough to coat a spoon; if it isn't, cook over medium-low heat, stirring, until thickened, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in garlic, 2 T parsley, and $\frac{1}{2}$ T thyme. Keep covered.

Preheat oven to 375 degree. Heat a deep, wide pot over medium-high heat 2 minutes. Swirl in 1 tbsp. oil and add leeks. Cook until tender but not browned, 3 to 4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Scoop leeks into a bowl and set aside.

Swirl 2 T oil into pot. Add mushrooms, season lightly with salt and pepper, and cook over medium heat, covered, until mushrooms are tender and beginning to release juices, about 5 minutes. Uncover and cook until edges start to brown. Stir in leeks and remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ T thyme. Remove from heat.

Mix Parmesan with Asiago.

Assemble lasagna: Oil a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Spread a few spoonfuls of béchamel over bottom. Arrange 3 noodles crosswise in dish, then spoon on about $\frac{1}{2}$ C béchamel, followed by a third of the mushrooms and $\frac{1}{3}$ C cheeses. Repeat layers twice more. Top with a final layer of noodles and béchamel, and sprinkle with remaining cheese.

Bake lasagna until browned and bubbling, about 45 minutes. Sprinkle with remaining 1 T parsley and let sit at least 15 minutes before slicing.

Make ahead: Through step 6, 1 day, chilled, or up to 3 months, frozen. Let chilled lasagna sit at room temperature 1 hour before baking. Frozen lasagna can either be thawed in the refrigerator overnight and then baked, or baked straight from the freezer for $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours (cover for first hour).