

Foodnity Recipes

Baked Ziti with Italian Sausage

20 min Prep time	**35 min** Cook time	**55 min** Total time
6 Servings	**Easy** Difficulty	**Italian** Cuisine

Ingredients

Pasta and Meat

- [ ] 1 lb beef sausage (sweet or spicy)
- [ ] 8 oz ziti pasta

The Sauce Base

- [ ] 1 tbsp olive oil
- [ ] 1 small onion, diced
- [ ] 3 cloves garlic, minced
- [ ] 1 tsp dried oregano
- [ ] 1 tsp dried basil
- [ ] 1/2 tsp crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
- [ ] 1 jar (24 oz) marinara sauce

Cheeses and Garnish

- [ ] 1 cup ricotta cheese
- [ ] 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- [ ] 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- [ ] Salt and pepper to taste
- [ ] Fresh basil or parsley for garnish

Instructions

1. Start by preheating your oven to 375°F (190°C). I usually take a moment to lightly grease my 9x13 inch baking dish with a bit of olive oil or cooking spray so nothing sticks—it just makes cleanup so much easier, yeah?

2. Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil. Toss in the ziti and let them cook until they're al dente, which usually takes about 8-10 minutes. Drain them well and just set them aside for a bit.

3. Heat your olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add in that diced onion and sauté it until it looks translucent and smells sweet, about 3-4 minutes. Then, stir in the minced garlic for another 30 seconds—careful not to burn it!

4. Add the beef sausage to the skillet, breaking it up with your spoon as it cooks. Let it brown through for about 5-7 minutes. I always drain the excess fat here, then stir in the oregano, basil, red pepper flakes, salt, and pepper.

5. Pour in the marinara sauce and stir it all together. Let it come to a gentle simmer and thicken up slightly for about 5 minutes. It smells just wonderful at this point.

6. In a large bowl, combine your drained ziti with the sausage sauce, the ricotta cheese, half of the mozzarella, and half of the Parmesan. Give it a good toss until every piece of pasta is evenly coated. Honestly, this is the best part.

7. Transfer half of that pasta mixture into your prepared baking dish. Sprinkle the rest of the mozzarella and Parmesan over that layer, then add the remaining pasta on top, smoothing it into a 2-3 inch layer. I like to drizzle a tiny bit of olive oil over the top for a nice finish.

8. Cover the dish with foil and bake it at 375°F for 20 minutes. Then, remove the foil and bake for another 10 minutes. You're looking for the cheese to be melted and bubbly—wow, it looks so good!

9. Take it out of the oven and let it rest for about 5 minutes; it helps the layers set. Garnish with some fresh basil or parsley and a bit more Parmesan if you're feeling fancy.

10. Serve it up hot with a crisp green salad or some warm garlic bread. Enjoy!

Nutrition per serving

580 kcal	31 g	42 g	32 g
Calories	Protein	Carbs	Fat

Tips & notes

- Draining the pasta a bit longer helps prevent the dish from becoming too watery.
- Using a 9x13 inch dish ensures the pasta cooks evenly without overflowing.
- Letting the dish rest for 5 minutes is key to getting those perfect scoops.