

clare's aussie spag bol



ingredients:

500g good quality beef mince¹
125g pork mince
3 bacon middle rashers - diced
1 large brown onion - diced
1 cup diced red capsicum (bell pepper)
1 cup diced green capsicum (bell pepper)
2 cups diced button mushrooms (more or less)
1 heaped teaspoon minced chilli²
1 heaped teaspoon minced garlic
1 heaped tablespoon mixed herbs³
2 x 400g tins of diced tomatoes⁴
Spray oil
Salt
Pepper
Pasta of your choosing⁵
Grated parmesan cheese

optional extras

½ cup red wine
250g cherry tomatoes⁶
1 level teaspoon ground ginger
2 tablespoons tomato paste
Tomato sauce
Barbeque sauce⁷
Sweet Chilli sauce
Extra mixed herbs

method

step 1: Using a large pan⁸, cook the diced bacon until well done (but not crispy) and set aside on absorbent paper towel to drain the excess fat.

step 2: To the same pan, add the diced onion and capsicums. Spray with oil first, if needed, and add salt and pepper to taste⁹. Cook until the onion becomes translucent and remove from the pan and set aside.

step 3: Using the same pan and ensuring it is hot, add the minces to cook. During the cooking process, break the mince up (I use a potato masher) and continue to cook until the minces brown. This is really important to ensure you develop a depth of flavour. Don't walk away, keep stirring constantly and don't worry if the mince starts to stick to the pan, that just makes it taste better. Add the red wine if using, if not add a splash of water, and scrape those bits off. (I usually forget the wine and end up drinking it - true story 😊)

(Work quickly through the next three steps.)

step 4: Once the mince has browned, reduce the heat (a little) and add the mixed herbs, chilli, garlic and ginger if you are using it. Stir constantly and appreciate the amazing aromas that are starting to develop.

step 5: Add the bacon and sautéed vegetables to the pan and continue stirring, incorporating everything together.

step 6: Now add the tomatoes and stir through. If using the additional sauces, add them now. I use a generous squirt of each (because I have them in soft, squeezable bottles) and I'm guessing the amount would be approx. ¼ cup of each. For a fuller, richer flavour, I also add the tomato paste but this is an optional extra and can be omitted. I often find I don't have any in the house.

step 7: Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to a gentle simmer.

(You can stop working so quickly now.)

step 8: Lid the pan, and allow to simmer for at least 1 hour, stirring frequently, but not constantly. The longer the sauce simmers, the deeper the flavours will become. Generally, 1½ hours will do, but you do need to stir frequently and continue simmering until the tomato juices have been reduced and the sauce thickens. It should not be runny and won't taste the same if it is.

step 9: Taste the sauce as you go and add additional herbs and spices to enhance the flavour if required¹⁰.

step 10: Prior to serving the sauce, add the diced mushrooms and cherry tomatoes if using them, and stir through. The aim here is to heat them without cooking them, so I usually add them about five minutes beforehand - usually when I add the pasta to the boiling water.

step 11: Serve with al dente pasta, parmesan cheese, and garlic bread and enjoy.
re-heat oven to 180°C and spray muffins tins with oil. This recipe makes 18, so I use one 12-muffin tin and one 6-muffin tin.

Helpful hints:

- Extra sauce can be frozen for use later. I've kept the frozen sauce in my freezer for months with no ill effect on its taste. This quantity makes enough for three meals for me and Dean – he does love sauce with pasta, not pasta with sauce – and, generally, we do have a small amount leftover that with/for lunch the following day.
- I guess I should clarify the red wine I use. I love Merlot, particularly a good Cabernet Merlot and my all time favourite is from Annie's Lane. I was thrilled we visited their cellar door when we drove through Clare Valley in South Australia more than three years ago and I can't believe it has been that long since we were there.
- Last, but by no means least, if you do try this at home, please come back and leave a comment. I'd love to hear about what you think of my personal recipe for our favourite family staple.

Enjoy!

(Do read the footnotes on the following page.)

footnotes:

- ¹ I use 95% fat-free [Heart Smart Extra Lean Beef Mince](#).
- ² I use [Masterfoods Freshly Chopped Chilli](#) because I have used it for years and I know exactly how much to use to get the desired amount of heat. Use less if you are unsure or don't like that bite that chilli adds. I also use Garlic and Ginger for (pretty much) the same reasons. If I have fresh garlic in the house, I mince three or four cloves depending on their size.
- ³ I use either Herbs or [Masterfoods Mixed Herbs](#) (this is starting to sound like an advertisement for Masterfoods). However, I have also mixed my own using dried Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme (sounds like a good line for a song :)) as well as Marjoram, Basil and Oregano - I have Basil and Rosemary growing in my garden now and often use them.
- ⁴ I use any brand of tinned tomatoes as well as any variety. Gourmet, Roma, vine-ripened - it doesn't matter, each is equally as good as the other and I don't even bother using fewer herbs if I buy a variety that has them added. You can also use fresh tomatoes but will need a larger quantity. It's been a while since I used fresh tomatoes, so I'm only guessing here when I say you might need 1 - 1½ kilos of tomatoes or perhaps even 2 kilos (2.2 - 3.5 pounds or even 4.6 pounds). Start by add 1 kg, then add the rest ½ at a time, if needed. The mince should be swimming in the juice of the tomatoes. This is then evaporated/reduced during the simmering process.
- ⁵ I use [San Remo Tagliatelle](#) pasta because it comes wound up into little 'nests' that are easily added (dropped) into the pot of boiling water. I then use tongs to gently encourage the pasta to unwind.
- ⁶ The cherry tomatoes in my photo are small, homegrown, and full of flavour and by adding them I invented, and hence, added a new variety to my [Fuel Production](#)- Turbo Charged Diesel. If using them, I recommend sourcing small cherry tomatoes, Solanato, mini Romas, or grape tomatoes. If you think they are too big, cut them in half before adding them to the sauce.
- ⁷ For extra punch, I recommend using [HP Sauce](#). Dean loves it, but I'm happy with the common variety BBQ Sauce.
- ⁸ I use my favourite pan - a 26" cast iron pan though I would like a larger one (hint, hint Santa) because this quantity of sauce does fill the pan to the brim. I also have a special wooden spoon I use that has developed a gorgeous, vibrant orange colour over the years.
- ⁹ I use pink rock salt and [Hoyt's Four Colour Mix](#) peppercorns and I grind both directly into the pan - approx. 5/6 turns of salt and twice that amount of pepper.
- ¹⁰ I often miss this step as I've been making this sauce for so long now that I know how good it will be without tasting it. This is not me bragging, just stating a fact, however, Dean usually sneaks into the kitchen for a spoonful or two when I'm not looking, so I guess he is my taste tester.