
Meatball Pasta Bake

The Essential Southern Living Cookbook

Preparation Time: 30 minutes

Start to Finish Time: 1 hour 10 minutes

1 package (16 ounce) uncooked penne
1 small sweet onion, chopped
1 medium fennel bulb (optional), thinly sliced
2 tablespoons olive oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon fennel seeds
2 jars (24 ounce ea) marinara sauce
2 packages (14 ounces ea) frozen beef meatballs, thawed
1 cup fresh orange juice
3/4 cup chicken broth
1 teaspoon firmly packed orange zest
1 medium red bell pepper, chopped
1/2 teaspoon Kosher salt
1 cup torn fresh basil
1 1/2 packages (8 ounce ea) fresh mozzarella cheese slices
torn fresh basil leaves (for garnish)

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Cook the pasta according to package directions. Drain.

Cook the onion and fennel, if desired, in hot oil in a Dutch oven over medium heat until tender, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the garlic and fennel seeds. Cook for 1 minute. Stir in the marinara sauce, meatballs, orange juice, chicken broth, orange zest, bell pepper and salt. Increase the heat to medium-high and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in one cup of basil and the cooked pasta. Salt to taste.

Transfer to a lightly greased 13 x 9-inch baking dish. Place the dish on an aluminum foil-lined baking sheet. Top with cheese. Bake until bubbly, about 25 minutes. Garnish with additional basil.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

Pasta

Per Serving (excluding unknown items): 758 Calories; 40g Fat (46.0% calories from fat); 16g Protein; 89g Carbohydrate; 14g Dietary Fiber; 0mg Cholesterol; 3584mg Sodium. Exchanges: 2 1/2 Grain(Starch); 1/2 Lean Meat; 3 1/2 Vegetable; 1 1/2 Fruit; 7 1/2 Fat.