

COOK'S ILLUSTRATED

BAKED ZITI

Serves 8 to 10. Published March 1, 2009. From Cook's Illustrated.

The test kitchen prefers baked ziti made with heavy cream, but whole milk can be substituted by increasing the amount of cornstarch to 2 teaspoons and increasing the cooking time in step 3 by 1 to 2 minutes. Our preferred brand of mozzarella is Dragone Whole Milk Mozzarella. Part-skim mozzarella can also be used, but avoid preshredded cheese, as it does not melt well. For tips on cooking with cottage cheese, see related How To Cook.

INGREDIENTS

- 1** pound whole milk cottage cheese or 1 percent cottage cheese (see note)
- 2** large eggs , lightly beaten
- 3** ounces grated Parmesan cheese (about 1 1/2 cups)
Table salt
- 1** pound ziti or other short, tubular pasta
- 2** tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 5** medium garlic cloves , minced or pressed through garlic press (about 5 teaspoons)
- 1** (28-ounce) can tomato sauce
- 1** (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes
- 1** teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2** cup plus 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil leaves
- 1** teaspoon sugar
Ground black pepper
- 3/4** teaspoon cornstarch
- 1** cup heavy cream (see note)
- 8** ounces low-moisture whole-milk mozzarella cheese , cut into 1/4-inch pieces (about 1 1/2 cups) (see note)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** 1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Whisk cottage cheese, eggs, and 1 cup Parmesan together in medium bowl; set aside. Bring 4 quarts of water to boil in large Dutch oven over high heat. Stir in 1 tablespoon salt and pasta; cook, stirring occasionally, until pasta begins to soften but is not yet cooked through, 5 to 7 minutes. Drain pasta and leave in colander (do not wash Dutch oven).
- 2.** 2. Meanwhile, heat oil and garlic in 12-inch skillet over medium heat until garlic is fragrant but not brown, about 2 minutes. Stir in tomato sauce, diced tomatoes, and oregano; simmer until thickened, about 10 minutes. Off heat, stir in 1/2 cup basil and sugar, then season with salt and pepper.
- 3.** 3. Stir cornstarch into heavy cream in small bowl; transfer mixture to now-empty Dutch oven set over medium heat. Bring to