

## This Easy Italian Bake is Packed with Pasta, Meat, and Melty Cheese

hearty, cheesy, and satisfying meal



**OVEN**  
**375°F**

**TIME**  
**15 min**

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**SAVE**  
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### INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound ground beef (or Italian sausage)
- 1 small onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1 jar (24 oz) marinara sauce
- 2 cups cooked pasta (penne, rigatoni, or ziti work best)
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup grated Parmesan cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional, for a little heat)
- 1 cup ricotta cheese (optional, for creaminess)
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped (for garnish)

How to Make the Best Italian Bake:

1. Preheat the Oven:
2. Brown the Meat:
3. Add the Sauce:
4. Assemble the Bake:
5. Bake Until Golden:
6. Garnish and Serve:

My Best Tips for Italian Bake:

Use high-quality marinara - A good sauce makes all the difference. Try homemade or a high-quality store brand.

Try different cheeses - Swap mozzarella for provolone, or mix in some smoked gouda for extra flavor.

Add veggies - Bell peppers, spinach, or mushrooms add nutrition and texture.

Make it ahead - Assemble the dish the night before and bake when ready to serve.

What to Serve with Italian Bake:

Garlic bread - Perfect for soaking up that extra sauce.

A fresh salad - A simple Caesar or mixed greens salad balances the richness.

Steamed or roasted veggies - Broccoli, asparagus, or zucchini pair well.

A glass of red wine - A bold Italian red like Chianti or Merlot complements the flavors beautifully.

FAQs:

## DIRECTIONS

- 1.** Preheat the Oven: Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C). Grease a 9x13-inch baking dish to prevent sticking.
- 2.** Brown the Meat: In a large skillet over medium heat, cook the ground beef until browned. Add the onion and garlic, cooking until softened (about 3 minutes). Season with salt, black pepper, and Italian seasoning.
- 3.** Add the Sauce: Pour in the marinara sauce and stir everything together. Let it simmer for 5 minutes, allowing the flavors to meld. If you like a little heat, sprinkle in the red pepper flakes.
- 4.** Assemble the Bake: In the prepared baking dish, spread half of the cooked pasta. Layer half of the meat sauce over the pasta, then sprinkle with half of the mozzarella and Parmesan cheese. If using ricotta, dollop spoonfuls over the layers.
- 5.** Repeat the layers with the remaining pasta, sauce, and cheeses.
- 6.** Bake Until Golden: Cover the dish with foil and bake for 20 minutes. Remove the foil and bake for another 10 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and bubbly.
- 7.** Garnish and Serve: Let the bake rest for 5 minutes before slicing. Sprinkle with fresh parsley and serve warm!
- 8.** My Best Tips for Italian Bake: Use high-quality marinara - A good sauce makes all the difference. Try homemade or a high-quality store brand.
- 9.** Try different cheeses - Swap mozzarella for provolone, or mix in some smoked gouda for extra flavor.
- 10.** Add veggies - Bell peppers, spinach, or mushrooms add nutrition and texture.

11. Make it ahead - Assemble the dish the night before and bake when ready to serve.
12. What to Serve with Italian Bake: Garlic bread - Perfect for soaking up that extra sauce.
13. A fresh salad - A simple Caesar or mixed greens salad balances the richness.
14. Steamed or roasted veggies - Broccoli, asparagus, or zucchini pair well.
15. A glass of red wine - A bold Italian red like Chianti or Merlot complements the flavors beautifully.
16. FAQs: Can I make this recipe ahead of time? Yes! Assemble everything, cover it with foil, and refrigerate for up to 24 hours before baking. You may need to add an extra 10 minutes to the baking time if baking straight from the fridge.
17. How do I store leftovers? Store leftovers in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 4 days. Reheat in the oven at 350°F or in the microwave.
18. Can I freeze : Italian Bake? Absolutely! Let it cool completely, then wrap it tightly in plastic wrap and foil. Freeze for up to 3 months. Thaw in the fridge overnight and reheat in the oven.
19. This : Best Italian Bake is a delicious, comforting meal that's easy to make and packed with flavor. Whether you're serving it for dinner tonight or making it ahead for a busy week, it's sure to become a family favorite.
20. Give it a try and let me know how it turns out!

**More recipes: [ChefManiac.com](https://chefmaniac.com)**

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/this-easy-italian-bake-is-packed-with-pasta-meat-and-melty-cheese/>