

Smoky Bacon & Three-Cheese Baked Ziti: A Hearty Italian-American Classic

Smoky Bacon & Three-Cheese Baked Ziti



OVEN
375°F

TIME
5-7 min

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SAVE
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INGREDIENTS

1 lb ziti pasta
6 slices of bacon, chopped
1 medium onion, diced
3 cloves of garlic, minced
1 can (28 oz) crushed tomatoes (San Marzano are excellent if you can find them)
1 tsp dried oregano
1 tsp dried basil
Salt and black pepper to taste
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese (sharp cheddar works best)
1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
Fresh parsley, chopped for garnish

DIRECTIONS

- 1. Preheat : Oven & Cook Pasta:** Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C). Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil. Add the ziti pasta and cook according to package instructions until it's al dente. Drain the pasta thoroughly and set aside.
- 2. Cook : Bacon:** While the pasta is cooking, place a large skillet over medium heat. Add the chopped bacon and cook until it's wonderfully crispy. Using a slotted spoon, remove the cooked bacon from the skillet and set it aside on a paper towel-lined plate to drain. Leave the rendered bacon grease in the skillet.
- 3. SautØ Aromatics:** Add the diced onion and minced garlic to the skillet with the bacon grease. SautØ for about 5-7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the onion is softened and translucent and the garlic is fragrant (be careful not to burn the garlic).
- 4. Simmer : Sauce:** Stir in the crushed tomatoes, dried oregano, dried basil, salt, and pepper to the skillet. Bring the sauce to a gentle simmer and let it cook for at least 10 minutes to allow the flavors to meld. Taste and adjust seasoning as needed.
- 5. Combine & : Mix with Cheese:** In a large mixing bowl, combine the cooked ziti pasta, the cooked and crumbled bacon, and the entire tomato sauce mixture. Add half of the shredded mozzarella cheese, half of the shredded cheddar cheese, and half of the grated Parmesan cheese to the bowl. Stir everything together until the pasta is evenly coated and the cheeses are well distributed.
- 6. Assemble & : Bake:** Transfer the entire ziti mixture to a greased 9x13 inch baking dish, spreading it out

evenly. Sprinkle the remaining mozzarella, cheddar, and Parmesan cheeses generously over the top.

7. Final : Bake: Bake in the preheated oven for 25-30 minutes, or until the cheese on top is melted, bubbly, and lightly golden brown.
8. Garnish & : Serve: Remove the baking dish from the oven. Let it rest for a few minutes before serving. Garnish with fresh chopped parsley before serving. Enjoy your delicious Smoky Bacon & Three-Cheese Baked Ziti!

SWAPS & NOTES

Pasta: While ziti is traditional for this dish, penne or rigatoni can be excellent substitutes if ziti isn't available.

Bacon: For an extra layer of flavor, consider using smoked bacon.

If you're looking for a vegetarian option, simply omit the bacon and use olive oil to sauté the vegetables.

You could also add some cooked, crumbled Italian sausage for a different meaty twist.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Don't Overcook Pasta: Cook the ziti to just al dente, as it will continue to cook in the oven.

Render Bacon Properly: Cook the bacon until truly crispy.

The rendered fat is key to flavoring the sauce.

Balance the Cheese: The three cheeses provide a great balance of meltiness and flavor.

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

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