

## Classic Baked Ziti Recipe: Hearty & Cheesy Family Favorite

Few dishes rival the comforting embrace of a classic baked ziti. This



**OVEN**  
**300°F**

**TIME**  
**8 min**

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### INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound dry ziti pasta
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 2 (26 ounce) jars spaghetti sauce (your favorite marinara or meat sauce)
- 6 ounces provolone cheese, sliced
- 1 ½ cups sour cream
- 6 ounces mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

Salt for pasta water

Swaps and Notes:

**Ziti Pasta:** Ziti is traditional, but penne or rigatoni would also work well. Cook it al dente, as it will finish cooking in the oven.

**Ground Beef:** Lean ground beef is great, but 80/20 ground beef will add more flavor. You can substitute with ground Italian sausage (mild or hot, casing removed) for a different flavor profile.

**Spaghetti Sauce:** Use your favorite jarred spaghetti sauce. A good quality marinara or a pre-made meat sauce works perfectly. My Classic Spaghetti Recipe with Homemade Sauce can be adapted if you prefer to make your own from scratch.

**Provolone Cheese:** Sliced provolone melts beautifully and adds a distinct mild, nutty flavor.

**Sour Cream:** This adds a wonderful creamy tang that lightens the richness of the dish. Full-fat sour

cream is recommended for the best texture. Ricotta cheese can be substituted for a more traditional Italian flavor, or combined with sour cream.

**Mozzarella Cheese:** Shredded mozzarella provides that classic gooey, stretchy cheese pull. Freshly shredded melts smoother.

**Parmesan Cheese:** Grated Parmesan adds a salty, savory finish and a golden crust.

**Aromatics (Optional):** You can add 2-3 minced garlic cloves to the ground beef and onion as they brown for extra flavor.

**Spices (Optional):** A pinch of dried oregano, basil, or red pepper flakes can be added to the meat sauce for more depth.

## DIRECTIONS

1. **Creating this delicious :** Baked Ziti is a straightforward process that leads to a hearty, bubbling casserole.
2. **Cook : Pasta:** Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a rolling boil. Add the ziti pasta and cook according to package directions until it is al dente, about 8 minutes. It should still have a slight bite as it will finish cooking in the oven. Drain the pasta thoroughly and set aside.
3. **Prepare : Meat Sauce:** Meanwhile, in a large skillet or Dutch oven, brown the 1 pound lean ground beef and 1 chopped onion over medium heat, breaking up the beef as it cooks, until the beef is fully cooked through and the onion is softened. Drain off any excess grease. Stir in the 2 (26 ounce) jars of spaghetti sauce into the beef mixture. Bring to a simmer and let it cook gently for 15 minutes to allow the flavors to meld.
4. **Preheat : Oven & Prep Dish:** Preheat your oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Lightly butter a 9x13-inch baking dish.
5. **First : Layer:** Spread 1/2 of the cooked ziti pasta evenly over the bottom of the prepared baking dish.
6. **Cheese & : Sauce Layers:** Top the ziti layer with slices of provolone cheese, covering the pasta. Then, dollop and spread the 1 1/2 cups sour cream evenly over the provolone. Spoon 1/2 of the meat sauce over the sour cream layer.
7. **Second : Layer:** Add the remaining ziti pasta in an even layer over the first sauce layer. Top with the 6 ounces shredded mozzarella cheese, followed by the remaining meat sauce.

8. Final : Topping: Sprinkle the 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese evenly over the top of the casserole.
9. Bake: Place the baking dish in the preheated oven. Bake for about 30 minutes, or until the casserole is heated through, the cheeses have melted and are bubbly, and the top is lightly golden. For a browner, crispier cheese topping, you can briefly place it under the broiler for 2-3 minutes (watch very carefully!).
10. Serve: Remove from oven and let rest for a few minutes before serving. Garnish with fresh chopped parsley if desired. Serve warm.

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