

## My Favorite Cheesy Rigatoni Bake: An Easy Weeknight Dinner

Some days just call for a big, hearty bowl of cheesy, saucy pasta. This



**OVEN**  
**350°F**

**TIME**  
**25-30 min**

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**SAVE**  
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### INGREDIENTS

1 pound rigatoni pasta, cooked al dente and drained  
2 jars (24 oz each) spaghetti sauce  
1 pound ground beef or sausage, browned and drained  
3 cups shredded mozzarella cheese (divided: 1 cup + 2 cups)  
1 tablespoon Italian seasoning  
1 cup grated Parmesan cheese  
Optional additions: 1-2 cups ricotta cheese for an extra creamy layer  
Fresh basil for garnish  
Salt and black pepper to taste

### DIRECTIONS

1. Prepare the : Pasta and Meat: Cook the rigatoni according to package directions until it is al dente. Drain well. While the pasta is cooking, brown the ground beef or sausage in a large skillet over medium heat. Drain any excess fat.
2. Combine the : Ingredients: In a very large bowl, combine the cooked and drained rigatoni, both jars of spaghetti sauce, the browned meat, 1 cup of the mozzarella cheese, the Italian seasoning, and the grated Parmesan cheese. If using, now is the time to add the ricotta cheese and season with salt and pepper. Stir everything together until it is thoroughly combined and the pasta is evenly coated.
3. Assemble and : Bake: Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C). Pour the pasta mixture into a 9x13-inch casserole dish and spread it into an even layer.
4. Add the : Final Cheese Layer: Sprinkle the remaining 2 cups of shredded mozzarella cheese evenly over the top of the casserole.
5. Bake: Bake the rigatoni bake for 25-30 minutes, or until the cheese is melted, bubbly, and the sauce is hot throughout. For a beautiful golden-brown and slightly crispy top, place the dish under the broiler for 1-2 minutes, watching carefully to prevent burning.
6. Serve: Let the dish cool for a few minutes before serving. Garnish with fresh basil, if desired.

### SWAPS & NOTES

Pasta: Rigatoni is great for this bake because its ridges and large holes hold onto the sauce and cheese perfectly.

You can also use other sturdy pasta shapes like ziti, penne, or fusilli.

Meat: Ground beef is a classic choice, but Italian sausage adds a wonderful flavor and a little bit of a spicy kick.

For a lighter version, you can use ground turkey or chicken.

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS

**Cook Pasta Al Dente:** Since the pasta will continue to cook in the oven, it's crucial to cook it al dente on the stove.

This prevents it from getting mushy in the final dish.

**Don't Forget the Seasoning:** The Italian seasoning and Parmesan cheese are what elevate this dish from simple to sensational.

**Broil with Caution:** The broiler can turn cheese from golden to burnt very quickly, so stay close to the oven and watch it carefully.

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

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/my-favorite-cheesy-rigatoni-bake-an-easy-weeknight-dinner/>