



# FROM ANDREA'S KITCHEN

## SPINACH BAKED ZITI

by Andrea Woodson

This month's recipe is Spinach Baked Ziti. In Southern Italy, Ziti means fiancée and is traditionally served at weddings and celebrations. Cooking traditional tomato sauce would usually take several hours to get the flavors like my Grandma's sauce. What I love about this recipe is that it comes together quickly, but has flavor like it simmered all day. Having four different cheeses makes this a creamy delicious dish. I hope you and your family will make this a part of your special celebrations. Buon Appetito!

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 cups Ricotta
- 3/4 cup Crème Fraîche
- 1 egg
- 3/4 cup of Parmesan cheese
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup of onion, chopped
- 3 cloves of garlic, crushed
- 1 Tablespoon oregano
- 1 Tablespoon basil
- 1 1/2 cups ground Italian sausage
- 1- 28 oz. can of whole tomatoes (I prefer San Mariano)
- 1- 14.5 oz. can of diced tomatoes
- 1 pound of Ziti pasta (penne can be substituted)
- 8 oz. fresh baby spinach
- 8 oz. fresh mozzarella



### PREPARATION

In a large bowl combine ricotta, Crème Fraîche, Parmesan cheese and egg. Season with salt and pepper.

Heat olive oil in large skillet over medium heat, add onion and sauté until soft, about 3-4 minutes. Add garlic, oregano, basil and sausage. Crumble sausage with a wooden spoon and cook until browned. Add tomatoes and simmer for about 20 minutes.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. While oven is heating cook pasta per package directions until al dente. Reserve 1/2 cup of pasta water and drain the rest from the cooked pasta. Place spinach in a colander and pour the reserved hot pasta water over spinach to wilt.

Remove the sauce from the heat and add half to ricotta mixture. Pour pasta into a large 13 x 9 baking dish along with ricotta mixture and spinach. Top with remaining sauce and mozzarella. Bake 20 minutes. Brown cheese under the broiler for additional five minutes. Remove from oven and rest 15 minutes before serving.

Make sure to keep your leftovers because this dish is even better the next day!