



T H E
THE FOOD DOULA

**SMOKY LENTIL
& BLACK BEAN
LASAGNE RECIPE**

Recipe notes...

This Lentil and Black Bean Ragu can be used not only in this lasagne but made in bigger batches, frozen and then used as a base across other dishes too. Effectively, the time put into prepping this one dish can be utilised laterally in so many different ways, just times the ragu part of recipe by 3 or 4 and separate into portions for the freezer. I've separated the ingredients into ragu, sauce and extras as these are the different elements of the dish and it may read easier if your planning to just make ragu for example. To be honest white sauce can be a pain in the ar** to make, so much stirring.. so make that in bigger batches too, keep in the freezer then defrost and use when you need for more lasagnes, or macaroni/ cauliflower cheese, simply heat on the hob and add a load of cheese et voila you've made your white sauce (béchamel) into a cheese sauce. Or, a side dish idea.. thinly slice potatoes, leeks and garlic then cover in defrosted white sauce portion, add pepper, parmesan and bake in the oven until the potatoes are cooked through. Making batches of meal bases or meal elements can allow you to think and cook laterally to save time and energy.. The way I cook prioritises speed and reserving my future energy but never compromises on eating delicious food.



The lentils and pulses I use I buy cooked, rather than soak myself. I find that lower value supermarket brand pulses can sometimes be hard, or mostly fine then the occasional bullet, these are harder to digest and so using better quality beans, that you know will be soaked/ soft are much easier on the gut, causing less gas, as well as being tastier & more indulgent. These are often the main protein I'm using in dishes (when not cooking with meat/ fish/ tofu) so I don't mind paying that extra. The sainsburys organic cartons of beans I find to be good and bold bean co do delicious beans at the higher end of budget but they are unmatched in edible joy factor! I always use merchant gourmet ready to eat lentils in this recipe. They have an already built in flavour from being cooking with bay leaf and its one less pan and certainly less time. When you spot they're on offer in supermakets which they often are, for £1.50 instead of £2.00, bulk buy! The main dishes I use these in are this ragu, and salads. They're so handy to have to make quick salad, bulked out as a main or as a side.

Notes on amending the recipe ... add other veg into your ragu if you're looking to really pack in the plants or if you have stuff that needs using up. If adding a root veg such as finely grated sweet potato or squash, add early on, same time as the carrot. Be mindful that this may alter the sweetness of the ragu due to the flavour profiles of these veg so taste and add more salt, pepper, paprika if you fancy or see fit. If adding chopped mushrooms add at the sauté stage after the onions to get a bit of browning on them and release that umami flavour into the oil. If adding chopped spinach or other delicate veg you would usually only boil for a few mins, add at the end. You could add walnuts to create another texture element and get some lovely planty good fats in there too. Going off piste is always encouraged, though I suggest following the recipe first time and making it your own from there.

WHAT ELSE TO USE THE RAGU IN, ON, WITH...

Enchiladas On Nachos Burritos Mash on top, pie style

Pasta Gnocchi Baked sweet potato Quesadillas Rice

Minus the pie, pasta, gnocchi, these would all be great with the addition of some kind of salsa eg: tomato, mango, coriander, lime or apple, chilli, mint and cucumber salsa / garlicky yoghurt/ cheese/slaw/ pink onions...I could go on. The ragu is very versatile beyond the lasagne, I use it as either a chilli or an Italian ragu. So, why not makes lots, portion, freeze, and refer back to these ideas.

TO GATHER

SERVES 4. GO ON... DOUBLE, TRIPLE, ETC
THE RECIPE FOR FUTURE MEALS!

RAGU

Extra virgin olive oil

- 1 medium red onion, finely diced/ grated
- 3 medium cloves garlic (grated on small setting)
- 1 heaped tablespoon sumac
- 2 heaped tablespoons smoked paprika
- 1 medium carrot (grated on small setting)
- 250g cooked black beans (include liquid)
- 250g pack pre cooked merchant gourmet puy lentils
- 1 400g carton of passata
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 100 ml bone broth or water
- Seasoning



WHITE SAUCE

- 85 g butter
- 6 tablespoons white flour
- 350 ml milk
- 2 medium cloves garlic, finely grated
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- Seasoning, a good pinch of each

PLUS

- Parmesan- 40g
- Lasagne sheets whichever you like, standard/ gf/wholewheat- as many as you need to cover layer area, twice! You could use thinly sliced cooked aubergine. courgette instead if you wanted.



Method...

RAGU

1. Heat a good glug of extra virgin olive oil - 3/4 table spoons in a pan on medium heat, add the onion and sweat for a 3-4 minutes, stirring, until translucent. If you have less time and you want to cook the ragu for less time overall (as it can be variable- see point 4.) make sure the onions are cooked for slightly longer at this stage- until **soft** before moving on to next bit.
2. Add 3 cloves of the grated garlic, stir for one minute, before adding sumac and smoked paprika with another good glug of olive oil, stir well. When you can smell the spices which will be shortly after you add them, chuck in the grated carrot, stir through.
3. Add crumbled veg stock cube with the carrot, plus puy lentils, black beans in their liquid and passata. Stir together before adding a good pinch of both salt and pepper, squeeze of honey (or sugar) and another glug of olive oil. Yes, we like olive oil!
4. Bring to the boil and then turn down to a gentle simmer on a low heat with the lid on for 20 minutes at least. Or you can have simmering for an hour if you have the time! If you are batch making and increasing quantities, try and opt for longer cooking. The longer, the more the flavours will infuse so just go with what your time allows. Stir occasionally to make sure nothing sticks to the bottom. Remove the lid and if its looking watery cook for a further 5-10 mins with no lid. You do want it juicy, but not lots of thin liquid so this time will allow a bit of thickening up, if it needs it. If it doesn't then use your intuition and skip this part.

WHITE SAUCE

1. Melt the butter on a low heat in a saucepan. When it's all melted, add the flour, one tablespoon at a time, stirring well with the butter to avoid lumps. I use a plastic whisk, but you can use a wooden spoon I just find it takes more work.
2. When you've added all the flour you'll have a thick paste. Add the milk slowly, 50 ml at a time, stirring rigorously, almost scribble the bottom of the pan with your wooden spoon/ whisk. We don't want lumps..but if there are lumps just really work it and it will be fine! When all of your milk is used, add seasoning, 1-2 cloves finely grated garlic (always 2 for me) and nutmeg. The consistency really depends on the rate at which you add the milk, and the heat of the hob. Add more milk if you feel the sauce is too thick, it should be the consistency of a custard. If you're making ahead of time be aware that as it cools it will likely continue to thicken. When you're ready to use you can always add a dash of milk to loosen it.

BUILD IT...

To assemble the lasagne (there will be two layers)...Layer half the ragu, next lasagne sheets- as many as you need to cover the surface, then half of the white sauce and half the grated parmesan, Repeat!

Preheat oven to 180 degrees. Cook in oven for 30-40 mins until brown on top and pasta cooked through. Efficiency of appliances vary so check after 30. Now... if you want your lasagne to 'hold' then LET IT REST before serving for 5-10 minutes. If you want it juicy sloppy serve it straight away!



SIDE IDEATION...



Ideas for what you may like to serve this with, which, depending on the occasion, will vary in how much effort level you want to give. It may also depend on what season it is. These are simply points of inspiration. I hope you enjoy this lasagne as much as my family and my customers do and you can weave this plant protein filled comfort food into your regular repertoire.



Herby, lemon zest, parmesan salad // Roasted sweet potato, squash, garlic and thyme // Grilled asparagus // Homemade chips // Peach, mozzarella chili and mint salad // Tenderstem broccoli with hazelnuts // Fennel, orange, watercress salad // Sweet potato chips // Frisee, orange, avocado, goats cheese salad // Garlic bread // Tomato, basil, parsley, red onion, spinach salad // Spinach, apple, pancetta, crouton salad // Warm ciabatta // Green beans, peas, ricotta, garlic // Love...