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Baked Rigatoni with Lamb Ragu

INGREDIENTS

- 3 TBSP** good olive oil
- 1 ½ C** chopped yellow onion (1 large)
- 2 C** (½-inch) diced carrots (3 large)
- 2 C** (½-inch) diced fennel, cored (1 medium)
- 1 LB** ground lamb
- 1 TBSP** minced garlic (3 cloves)
- 1 TBSP** whole fennel seeds, roughly chopped
- 2 TBSP** tomato paste
 - 1** (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes, such as San Marzano
- 2 ½ C** dry red wine, such as Chianti or Côtes du Rhône, divided
- 1 TSP** dried oregano, crushed with your hands
- ¼ TSP** crushed red pepper flakes
 - Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 LB** rigatoni, such as De Cecco
 - 2** extra-large eggs
 - ¾ C** heavy cream
 - 1 LB** fresh salted mozzarella, divided
 - ½ C** freshly grated Italian Parmesan cheese

DIRECTIONS

- 1** Heat the olive oil in a medium (10 to 11-inch) heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven, such as Le Creuset, over medium heat. Add the onion, carrots, and fennel and sauté for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables begin to brown. Add the lamb, garlic, and fennel seeds and cook for 8 minutes, breaking up the lamb with a wooden spoon, until no longer pink. Stir in the tomato paste, tomatoes, 2 cups of the wine, the oregano, red pepper flakes, 1 tablespoon salt, and 1 teaspoon black pepper. Bring to a boil, lower the heat, and simmer, partly covered, for 40 minutes, stirring occasionally. Off the heat, stir in the remaining ½ cup of red wine.
- 2** Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Bring a large pot of water to a boil, add 2 tablespoons salt and the rigatoni and cook according to the directions on the package, until barely al dente. Drain.
- 3** In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs and cream. Add the rigatoni and toss well. Grate half of the mozzarella on a box grater and add it to the rigatoni mixture. Add the lamb mixture, 2 teaspoons salt, and 1 teaspoon black pepper and toss well.
- 4** Transfer a 10 × 14 × 2-inch baking dish and sprinkle with the Parmesan. Slice the remaining mozzarella and arrange it on top. Bake for 40 to 45 minutes, until the sauce is hot and bubbling and some of the pasta is crusty on top. Serve hot
- 5** Make ahead: The dish can be completely assembled a day in advance and refrigerated. Bake just before serving.

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