

## Eggplant & chickpea lasagne.

'THE WAR STARTER', BECAUSE IT'S SO GOOD HE WOULD FIGHT FOR IT.

### RED SAUCE

extra-virgin olive oil

2 onions, diced

½ bunch (60 g) basil, leaves and stalks separated, both finely chopped

2 rosemary sprigs, leaves stripped and finely chopped

2 teaspoons thyme leaves

freshly ground black pepper

200 g mushrooms, diced

4 large garlic cloves, crushed

2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar

2 tablespoons unrefined sugar (e.g. rapadura)

½ teaspoon unrefined salt

750 ml (3 cups) chunky passata (see note)

### WHITE SAUCE

50 g unsalted butter

freshly ground black pepper

ground nutmeg

50 g brown rice flour

500 ml (2 cups) full-cream milk

50 g grating cheese (such as cured cacioricotta, page 148, or pecorino)

unrefined salt

### THE REST

2 eggplants (about 600 g in total), cut into 4-5 mm thick slices

300 g (1½ cups) cooked chickpeas (as per preparation guide, page 339)

50 g grating cheese (as above)

freshly ground black pepper

This tastes just like a meaty traditional lasagne, but it's almost completely grain free and is 100% vegetarian. It's a combination of my recipe and my Auntie Terri's recipe. This is something everyone asks for on their birthday and our friend Joe calls it 'The War Starter', because it's so good he would fight for it. Share with many and make memories. *-Lentil*

Preheat the oven to 200°C fan-forced.

For the red sauce, add a generous splash of oil to a deep saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion, basil stalks, rosemary, thyme and a big pinch of pepper and sauté for 3-4 minutes until the onion begins to soften. Add the mushrooms, garlic, vinegar, sugar, salt and a splash of passata, fry for a few minutes, then add the basil leaves and the remaining passata. Add 180 ml (¾ cup) of water to the passata bottle and shake to get out any remaining tomato, then empty into the pan (if using fresh tomatoes, skip this step). Cover and simmer for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, to make the white sauce, add the butter, two big pinches of pepper and a big pinch of nutmeg to a medium saucepan over medium heat. Once the butter has fully melted, add the flour and fry for a minute or two while stirring. Then slowly add the milk while whisking. Increase the heat to a gentle boil and whisk until the sauce is smooth and thick, about 5 minutes. Turn off the heat and stir through the cheese until melted, then season to taste.

Layer your lasagne in a deep baking dish or casserole dish (37 cm x 22 cm, or the equivalent, with a lid). There are basically three layers. Divide your ingredients accordingly and layer into the dish as follows:

**LAYER 1**—red sauce, eggplant slices, red sauce, half the chickpeas, white sauce.

**LAYER 2**—eggplant slices, red sauce, remaining chickpeas, white sauce.

**LAYER 3**—eggplant slices, red sauce, white sauce, grated cheese, black pepper.

Cover and bake for 20 minutes, then remove the lid and bake for a further 25-30 minutes until golden brown and bubbling. Your lasagne should be fully cooked, with a crisp top, and the eggplant should be super collapsed. Allow to cool a little in the dish before serving—it's super-hot! We love to serve it with fresh basil leaves, a drizzle of oil on top, a fresh salad and bread on the side.

### RECIPE NOTE.

The freshness and chunkiness of the passata is key to this recipe. So, if you don't have chunky (preferably homemade) passata, use tinned diced tomatoes, or dice 1.5-2 kg ripe fresh tomatoes—just no tomato puree or pureed passata!

Mains.

