

Sausage Stuffed Zucchini Boats

Ingredients:

4 medium zucchini cut in half, lengthwise
1 tsp salt
1 tsp black pepper
1 1/2 lb mild or spicy Italian sausage
1 medium sweet onion finely diced
3 medium cloves garlic minced
2-3 cups marinara sauce
3 Tbsp tomato paste
1 1/2 tsp dry Italian seasoning
1/2 tsp crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
1 cup part skim or whole milk ricotta cheese
1 large egg
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Spoon a couple of Tbsp of the marinara on the bottom of your dish and spread around.
2. Use a spoon or a melon-baller to scoop out the zucchini seeds and flesh leaving at least a 1/3 inch border. Arrange halves side by side in the pan. Season to taste with salt and black pepper. Set aside.
3. In a large skillet cook sausage and onion over medium high heat for 5-8 minutes or until no pink remains.
4. Add garlic to the sausage mixture. and cook for 1 minute longer. Drain any excess fat from the pan.
5. To the skillet add marinara sauce, tomato paste, 1 tsp Italian seasoning and crushed red pepper flakes (if using). Simmer for 2-3 minutes or just until the tomato paste has melted, and the sauce is fully combined. Remove from heat.
6. In a small bowl, mix the ricotta, egg, 1 Tbsp Parmesan and 1/2 tsp dried Italian seasoning.
7. **To Assemble:** Sprinkle 1/2 of shredded mozzarella cheese onto the bottom of each zucchini boat.
8. Dollop ricotta mixture over cheese dividing it evenly between the zucchini halves then top with Italian sausage sauce. Sprinkle the tops with remaining mozzarella and grated Parmesan cheese.
9. Place into the oven and bake for 20-25 minutes. (Test for doneness with the tip of a knife.) The zucchini should pierce easily and feel tender.
10. Enjoy!