BAKED ZITI

Baked Ziti is a popular recipe and has been a staple in many southern Italian homes for generations. Make it as-is with this base recipe or dress it up with some added veggies! Additional veggies not only add nutritional value, but they will also add color and texture to the dish.

Yield: 8 servings
Serving Size: 1 portion

Ingredients:
- 12 ounces dried **pasta** of choice, such as gluten free or whole wheat pasta
- 1 lb. **lean ground beef**
- 1, 24 ounces jarred **marinara sauce**
- 1 ½ cups shredded **mozzarella cheese** (reduced **fat preferred),** divided
- 1 teaspoon **Italian seasoning**
- Optional toppings: **fresh basil and parmesan**
- Add veggies to this recipe by adding chopped spinach, zucchini, onion, or mushrooms. See step 5.

Instructions:
1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease a 9×13-inch baking dish with non-stick cooking spray and set aside.
2. Add ground beef to a sauté pan over medium-high heat. Break up the meat using a spatula, so it cooks evenly; cook until the meat is no longer pink. Drain fat from meat, if needed.
3. Transfer meat mixture to a plate lined with paper towel.
4. While the meat is cooking, bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add pasta and cook for 10-11 minutes or until *al dente* (pasta should be slightly firm). Drain pasta and pour into the prepared pan.
5. Add meat, marinara sauce, 3/4 cup of the cheese, and Italian seasoning to the dish with the noodles. Stir gently to combine. Sprinkle with remaining 3/4 cup cheese.
   *If adding vegetables, add veggies to a hot pan with oil. Sauté until vegetables are soft and lightly browned; add to noodles, meat, and cheese. Mix to combine
6. Cover the dish with foil and bake for 30 minutes or until hot and bubbly. Remove foil for the last 10 minutes to allow cheese on top to melt.
7. Sprinkle with fresh basil and parmesan, if desired. Serve while warm.

Per Serving: Calories 311, Carbohydrates, 34.5g, Protein 24.9g, Saturated Fat 4.4g, Sodium 304.5 mg, Fiber 4.7g, Sugars 2.4g
This recipe was adapted from www.therealfooddietitians.com.