

Zucchini Lasagna

NUTRIENT ANALYSIS	
Calories	317
Protein	32 g
Carbohydrate	14 g
Total Fat	15 g
Saturated Fat	5 g
Cholesterol	65 mg
Fiber	3 g
Sugars	7 g
Sodium	823 mg

Each serving counts as ½ protein, 1 nonstarchy vegetable, and 1 low-fat dairy product.

If you are Italian, or simply a fan of Italian cuisine, losing weight does not mean you have to abandon your culture or your love of food. It does, however, require that you make a few minor substitutions in order to offset the effects of fat-promoting refined carbohydrates in your diet. As a positive step in this direction, try this taste-good, noodleless zucchini lasagna, which is calorie- and carb-controlled to help you manage your weight.

8 servings

3 large zucchini, washed but not peeled
 2 teaspoons salt, or less, as needed
 2 teaspoons olive oil
 4 garlic cloves, minced
 1 teaspoon fennel seeds
 ¼ teaspoon crushed red-pepper flakes
 1 pound lean ground beef
 1 (26-ounce) jar marinara sauce (3 cups)
 Nonstick spray
 1½ cups fat-free ricotta
 4 ounces shredded fat-free mozzarella
 ¼ cup pasteurized egg substitute
 1 teaspoon freshly grated or ground nutmeg (*see Note*, page 129)
 1 tablespoon whole-wheat bread crumbs
 2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese

1. Use a cheese plane to slice the zucchini into long strips. To do this, hold the vegetable in one hand, then pull the plane down it, creating a long strip about ¼-inch thick. Clean and dry your work surface and line it with paper towels. Lay zucchini strips on the

paper towels in a single layer; sprinkle both sides lightly with salt, and let stand at room temperature for 15 minutes, turning strips once as they sweat out their moisture.

2. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large saucepan set over medium heat. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, until lightly browned, about 30 seconds. Add the fennel seeds and red-pepper flakes and cook 30 seconds. Crumble in the ground beef and continue cooking and stirring until the meat is browned, about 3 minutes. Stir in the marinara sauce, bring to a simmer, cover, and reduce the heat to low. Simmer about 10 minutes.

3. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a 9 x 13-inch baking dish with nonstick spray.

4. Thoroughly combine the ricotta, mozzarella, egg substitute, and nutmeg in a large bowl and set aside.

5. Use fresh paper towels to wipe salt and moisture from the zucchini strips. Gently squeeze the strips between fresh paper towels to remove any excess moisture, but take care not to crush or tear them.

6. Build the lasagna by sprinkling the bottom of the prepared baking dish with 1 teaspoon whole-wheat bread crumbs. Lay $\frac{1}{3}$ of the zucchini slices in the bottom of the pan, overlapping as necessary. Spoon $\frac{1}{3}$ of the red sauce over them, then spread $\frac{1}{2}$ the cheese mixture over the sauce. Sprinkle with 1 teaspoon bread crumbs, then layer with $\frac{1}{2}$ the remaining zucchini slices. Spoon $\frac{1}{2}$ the remaining sauce over them, then spread the rest of the cheese mixture over the top. Sprinkle with remaining 1 teaspoon bread crumbs. Finish with remaining zucchini sauce. Sprinkle with grated Parmesan.

7. Bake until bubbling and quite hot, about 50 minutes. Let stand 5 minutes before slicing and serving.