



Easy Crockpot Baked Ziti with 15-Minute Prep

Why I Love My Crockpot

My old crockpot is my best kitchen friend. It does all the hard work for me. I just add the ingredients and walk away. It fills the house with the most wonderful smells.

This matters because it gives you time back. You can go play outside or do your homework. Coming home to a hot meal feels like a big hug. Doesn't that sound nice?

A Little Story for You

I first made this for my grandson, Leo. He is a very picky eater. He ate

two big bowls and asked for more! I still laugh at the cheese on his nose.

That is why this recipe is a winner. It brings everyone to the table with happy smiles. What is a meal your family always loves? Tell me about it sometime.

Let's Talk Flavor

The herbs and garlic make the meat sauce sing. Then you get the creamy, dreamy ricotta cheese. The mozzarella on top gets all golden and bubbly.

Fun fact: The word "ziti" just means "bridegrooms" in Italian. I think it's a fancy name for a simple, friendly pasta. Do you have a favorite type of cheese?

Making It Together

This is a great recipe for helpers. Kids can pour the sauce and sprinkle the cheese. Getting your hands busy in the kitchen is so much fun.

This matters because cooking together makes memories. You remember the stories and the laughs. It's about more than just the food. What was the last thing you helped cook?

A Tip for the Pasta

Now, you might wonder about the uncooked pasta. Trust your grandma on this one. The slow cooker magic softens it perfectly. It soaks up all that saucy goodness.

No need to boil it first. That is the real secret. It saves you one more pot



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to wash. And we all love fewer dishes to clean, right?



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Ingredients:

Ingredient	Amount	Notes
Lean ground beef	1 pound	
Onion	½ cup	diced
Garlic	1 teaspoon	minced (2 cloves)
Basil	1 teaspoon	
Oregano	1 teaspoon	
Pasta sauce	48 ounces	or make your own!
Baked ziti	16 ounces	uncooked
Ricotta cheese	1 cup	
Parmesan cheese	½ cup	
Mozzarella cheese	2 cups	shredded, divided into 2 one cup servings
Fresh parsley	As needed	chopped

Easy Crockpot Baked Ziti: Your New Best Friend

This recipe is my go-to on busy days. It feels like a big, warm hug from the slow cooker. My grandson Leo calls it “red noodles” and always asks for seconds. Doesn’t that just make your heart smile?

See also [A Classic Creole Red Beans and Rice Dish](#)

1. First, grab your big skillet. Brown that beef with your diced onion. I like to listen for that happy sizzle. It reminds me of my own grandma’s kitchen. (Hard-learned tip: drain the fat well. A soupy bottom layer makes the pasta too soft!). 2. Now, stir in your garlic and herbs. Oh, that smell takes me back. Cook it just for a minute. You want the garlic

to be friendly, not fierce. Then mix in one jar of sauce. This is your rich, meaty base. 3. Let's build our layers in the crockpot. Start with some plain sauce on the bottom. This keeps everything from sticking. Then add half your dry pasta. It feels strange, I know. But trust me, it cooks perfectly. **Have you ever tried cooking pasta without boiling it first? Share below!** 4. Now for the fun part! Spoon half the meat over the pasta. Then dollop on the ricotta and sprinkle the parmesan. Add one cup of mozzarella. I still laugh at how my husband tries to sneak cheese straight from the bag. 5. Repeat your layers once more. Sauce, pasta, and the rest of the meat. Pop the lid on and walk away for six hours on low. The waiting is the hardest part, isn't it? Your whole house will smell amazing. 6. Fifteen minutes before eating, top it with the last cup of mozzarella. Let that lid melt it into gooey perfection. Then just scoop it out and watch it disappear. I love seeing everyone gather around the table for this one. **Cook Time:** 6 hours **Total Time:** 6 hours 15 minutes **Yield:** 8 servings **Category:** Dinner

Three Tasty Twists to Try

I love a recipe you can make your own. It's like a favorite story you can tell a new way each time. Here are some simple ideas to change things up. **Go Green:** Swap the beef for a bag of fresh spinach. It wilts down so nicely and is so good for you. **Spicy Kick:** Add a pinch of red pepper flakes to the meat. It gives it a little warmth that wakes up your taste buds.

See also Creamy Penne Pasta Delight

Italian Sausage Swap: Use mild Italian sausage instead of beef. The fennel in it gives such a lovely, cozy flavor. Which one would you try first? Comment below!

The Perfect Plate & Pour

This ziti is a whole meal by itself. But a little something on the side makes it special. I always serve it with a simple green salad. The crisp lettuce is so nice with the rich pasta. Garlic bread is a must for dipping in that extra sauce. A sprinkle of fresh parsley on top makes it look pretty, too. For a drink, milk is always a classic choice for the kids. Grown-ups might like a glass of Chianti with theirs. Which would you choose tonight?



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Keeping Your Ziti Cozy for Later

Let's talk about storing this lovely dish. It keeps well in the fridge for three days. Just pop it in a sealed container. For the freezer, use a freezer-safe dish. It will be good for two months. Thaw it in the fridge overnight before reheating. I once sent a frozen batch to my grandson at college. He said it made his whole dorm room smell like home. To reheat, add a splash of water and warm it in the oven. This keeps the pasta from drying out. Batch cooking this ziti saves your future self. On a busy night, a ready-made meal is a lifesaver. It means more time for family and less stress for you. Have you ever tried storing it this way? Share below!

Simple Fixes for Common Ziti Hiccups

Sometimes the pasta gets too soft. To avoid this, try checking it an hour early. I remember when I first used my crockpot. I learned all cookers are a little different. If your sauce seems too thick, just stir in a little water. This will loosen it right up. If the cheese on top isn't browning, use the broiler for a minute. Watch it closely so it doesn't burn! Getting the layers right builds your cooking confidence. A few easy fixes make the flavors just perfect. Which of these problems have you run into before?

Your Ziti Questions, Answered

****Q:** Can I make this gluten-free? ****A:** Yes! Just use your favorite gluten-free pasta. It works just as well. ****Q:** Can I prepare it ahead of time? ****A:** Absolutely. Assemble it all and keep it in the fridge. Cook it the next day.

See also Outback Steakhouse Copycat Alice Springs Chicken Recipe

****Q: What can I use instead of beef?**** A: Ground turkey or Italian sausage are great swaps. They are both delicious.

****Q: Can I double this recipe?**** A: You can, if your crockpot is big enough. It feeds a crowd!

***Fun fact:** The word “ziti” means “bridegrooms” in Italian!* It was a traditional wedding pasta.

****Q: Is the fresh parsley important?**** A: It adds a fresh, colorful finish. But it’s okay to skip it if you need to. Which tip will you try first?

From My Kitchen to Yours

I hope you love this easy baked ziti. It is a true comfort food. Making it should be simple and fun. I would love to see your creation. Share a picture of your family enjoying it. Have you tried this recipe? Tag us on Pinterest! Happy cooking! —Elowen Thorn.

You need to try this!



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Easy Crockpot Baked Ziti with 15-Minute Prep

Author: Elowen Thorn



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Cooking Method: [Slow Cooker](#)



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Cuisine: [Italian](#)



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Courses: [Main](#)



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Difficulty: **Beginner**



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Prep time: **15 minutes**



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Cook time: **6 minutes**



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Rest time:



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Total time: **6 minutes**



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Servings: **8 servings**



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Calories:**497 kcal**



Best Season: **Summer**

Description

Crockpot baked ziti brings together tender pasta, hearty meat, and

melty cheese with just fifteen minutes of prep. This slow cooker dinner makes busy weeknights easier and fills everyone up fast.

Ingredients

- ☐ 1 pound lean ground beef
- ☐ ½ cup onion (diced)
- ☐ 1 teaspoon garlic (minced (2 cloves))
- ☐ 1 teaspoon basil
- ☐ 1 teaspoon oregano
- ☐ 48 ounces pasta sauce (or make your own!)
- ☐ 16 ounces baked ziti (uncooked)
- ☐ 1 cup ricotta cheese
- ☐ ½ cup parmesan cheese
- ☐ 2 cup mozzarella (shredded (divided into 2 one cup servings))
- ☐ chopped fresh parsley

Instructions

1. Brown ground beef in a skillet with onions until cooked through. Drain meat if needed.
2. Add garlic, basil, oregano, salt, and pepper then stir together. Cook for about one minute, stirring it constantly.
3. Stir in 1 of the jars of pasta sauce into the ground beef mixture.
4. Take the second jar of sauce and pour half in the bottom of the slow cooker.
5. Pour half the uncooked ziti pasta on top of the sauce pasta.
6. Pour half of the meat mixture on top of the uncooked ziti pasta.
7. Top the meat mixture with the ricotta cheese, parmesan cheese, and 1 cup of the mozzarella cheese.
8. Add the remaining half jar of pasta sauce on top of the cheeses.

9. Add the other half of the uncooked ziti pasta on top of the pasta sauce.
10. Cover the uncooked ziti pasta with the remaining meat mixture.
11. Place the lid on the crockpot and cook on low six hours.
12. Fifteen minutes before serving, add the last cup of mozzarella cheese on top and replace the lid until everything melts.
13. Serve and enjoy!

Keywords:Crockpot, Baked Ziti, Pasta, Ground Beef, Slow Cooker