

Cream Cheese And Sausage Pasta Bake

INGREDIENTS

12 oz tubular pasta, like penne, ziti, or rigatoni
1 lb ground mild Italian sausage
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream
4 oz cream cheese
1 (24 oz) jar tomato-basil pasta sauce
1 (14 oz) can diced tomatoes with juices
3 cloves garlic, minced
3 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh basil leaves, roughly chopped
1 teaspoon kosher salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional)
2 tablespoons olive oil

PREPARATION

Cook pasta according to package instructions. Drain and set aside.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a 2-quart casserole dish with cooking spray. Set aside.

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook sausage until browned.

Pour pasta sauce and diced tomatoes with juices into skillet. Stir to deglaze the pan. Add garlic, salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes, if using.

Add heavy cream and cream cheese and stir until melted into the sauce. Bring to a simmer then reduce heat to low.

Transfer cooked pasta to prepared baking dish. Top with $\frac{1}{2}$ of the mozzarella cheese. Pour sauce over top and stir gently until noodles are evenly coated. Top with remaining mozzarella cheese.

Sprinkle $\frac{1}{2}$ of the basil leaves then bake for 20 minutes or

until cheese begins to bubble.

Remove from oven to rest for 5-10 minutes before serving.

Garnish with remaining basil leaves.