

COMFORTING Cheese and Pepper (*Cacio e Pepe*) Kugel

While the news online and Television may be making you and your loved ones anxious, here is a recipe that is pure comfort and indulgence.

My favorite Roman Dish is simple and luscious. Pasta, cooked perfectly and tossed with lots of black pepper and cheese. YUM! This is my mashup for trying times and as an ode to one of my favorite cities in the world.

Part pasta, part kugel, part Italian, VERY JEWISH and with best part, the dish being easy to cook and served hot or cold.

- 1 pound dried spaghetti
- 1½ cups whole milk
- 3 large eggs, room temperature
- 1½ teaspoons sea or kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper (don't skimp here!)
- Pinch crushed red chilies (optional)
- ¾ cup finely grated parmesan cheese
- 3 cups grated Swiss cheese
- 3 cups grated mozzarella, or a similar semisoft cheese

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Butter a 9-inch spring form pan. Wrap the bottom very securely in one large sheet of aluminum foil. Set the pan on a rimmed baking sheet lined with foil.

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook spaghetti just until it's very al dente. Do not cook until completely tender as it will continue to cook in the oven.
2. When pasta is done, drain well and let cool slightly.
3. In a pot, whisk together the milk, eggs, salt, and black and red chilies. Set $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of each of the Swiss and mozzarella cheeses aside. Stir the rest of the grated cheese, as well as parmesan, into the milk and egg mixture.
4. Stir slightly cooled spaghetti into milk and cheese, until completely combined.
5. Transfer mixture to prepared spring form pan. Smooth the top so it's relatively even and sprinkle reserved grated cheese over the top.
6. Bake for 30-35 minutes, until the kugel feels just set in the center and is slightly bubbling around the edges.
7. Turn on the broiler and brown the top of the kugel on the upper-third rack of the oven until well-browned. Watch closely as the pie can go from perfect to over-cooked in seconds!
8. Remove from oven and run a knife around the inside of the cake pan to loosen the pie from the sides. Let sit and release and remove sides of spring form pan.
9. Serve while still warm, cut into wedges.