Prep Time: 25 minutes
Cook Time: 45 minutes
Total Time: 1 hour 10 minutes
Servings: 6
Calories: ~340 kcal per serving

Why You'll Love This Lasagna
If you are watching your carbs, eating gluten-free, or simply looking for a lighter take on a classic, this Zucchini No-Noodle Lasagna is a revelation. Thin ribbons of zucchini stand in for traditional pasta sheets, layered with a rich, garlicky meat sauce, creamy ricotta, and plenty of melted mozzarella. The result is a hearty, comforting bake that captures everything you love about lasagna—the layers, the cheese pull, the saucy richness—without the heaviness. It is also a brilliant way to use up a bumper crop of summer zucchini. The key technique here is salting and pre-roasting the zucchini slices so they release their excess water; skip this step and you will end up with a watery, soupy lasagna. Do it right, and you will be rewarded with a structurally sound, deeply flavorful bake that even pasta lovers will happily devour.

Ingredients
For the Zucchini "Noodles"
4 medium zucchini (about 2 lbs / 900g), sliced lengthwise into 1/4-inch thick planks

1 tbsp salt (for drawing out moisture)

1 tbsp olive oil (for brushing)

For the Meat Sauce
1 tbsp olive oil

1 lb (450g) ground beef (85% lean) or ground turkey

1 medium yellow onion, finely diced

4 cloves garlic, minced

1 can (28 oz) crushed tomatoes

1 can (14 oz) diced tomatoes, drained

2 tbsp tomato paste

1 tsp dried oregano

1 tsp dried basil

1/2 tsp fennel seeds (optional, but adds classic sausage flavor)

1/2 tsp red pepper flakes (optional)

Salt and black pepper to taste

For the Cheese Layers
15 oz (425g) whole-milk ricotta cheese

1 large egg

1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, freshly grated

2 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped

1/4 tsp ground nutmeg

3 cups (12 oz) low-moisture mozzarella cheese, shredded

Fresh basil, chopped, for garnish

Equipment Needed
Mandoline slicer or sharp chef’s knife (for zucchini planks)

Colander or wire rack (for draining zucchini)

Large skillet (for meat sauce)

9×13-inch baking dish

Mixing bowl (for ricotta mixture)

Paper towels

Instructions
Phase 1: Prepare & Salt the Zucchini (Time: 20 mins | Intensity: Medium)
Slice the Zucchini: Using a mandoline or a sharp knife, slice the zucchini lengthwise into planks about 1/4-inch thick. Aim for even thickness so they cook uniformly.

Salt & Drain: Lay the zucchini planks on a wire rack over a baking sheet (or on layers of paper towels). Sprinkle generously with the 1 tablespoon of salt on both sides. Let them sit for 15 minutes to draw out excess moisture.

Pat Dry: After 15 minutes, you will see beads of water on the surface. Pat the zucchini completely dry with paper towels. This step is critical—do not skip it.

Pre-Roast (Highly Recommended): Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Brush the zucchini planks lightly with olive oil and arrange them on a baking sheet in a single layer. Roast for 10–12 minutes, until softened and slightly shrunk. This extra step guarantees a non-watery lasagna and concentrates the flavor. Set aside and reduce the oven temperature to 375°F (190°C).

Phase 2: Make the Meat Sauce (Time: 15 mins | Intensity: Medium-High)
Brown the Meat: Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the ground beef and cook, breaking it apart with a wooden spoon, for 5–6 minutes until browned and no longer pink. Drain excess fat if necessary.

Sauté the Aromatics: Add the diced onion and cook for 3–4 minutes until softened. Stir in the

minced garlic and cook for 1 minute more until fragrant.

Build the Sauce: Stir in the tomato paste and cook for 1 minute. Add the crushed tomatoes, drained diced tomatoes, oregano, basil, fennel seeds, and red pepper flakes. Season with salt and pepper.

Simmer: Bring the sauce to a gentle simmer and cook for 8–10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened. Taste and adjust seasoning.

Phase 3: Mix the Ricotta Layer (Time: 3 mins | Intensity: Low)
Combine: In a medium bowl, whisk the egg. Add the ricotta, 1/4 cup of the Parmesan, chopped parsley, and nutmeg. Stir until smooth and well combined. Season lightly with salt and pepper.

Phase 4: Assemble the Lasagna (Time: 8 mins | Intensity: Low)
Preheat: Ensure your oven is set to 375°F (190°C). Lightly grease the 9×13-inch baking dish.

First Layer: Spread a thin layer (about 3/4 cup) of the meat sauce on the bottom of the dish. This prevents sticking.

Zucchini Layer: Arrange a single layer of zucchini planks over the sauce, overlapping slightly.

Ricotta Layer: Dollop half of the ricotta mixture over the zucchini and spread gently into an even layer.

Mozzarella: Sprinkle with 1 cup of the shredded mozzarella.

Repeat: Add another layer of meat sauce, then the remaining zucchini planks, the remaining ricotta, and 1 cup of mozzarella.

Final Layer: Top with the remaining meat sauce, then the remaining 1 cup of mozzarella and the remaining 1/4 cup of Parmesan.

Phase 5: Bake & Rest (Time: 35 mins | Intensity: Low)

Bake: Cover the dish loosely with foil (tent it so it doesn’t stick to the cheese) and bake for 25 minutes. Remove the foil and bake for another 10–12 minutes, until the cheese is bubbling and golden brown on top.

Rest: This is the most important step for a clean slice—let the lasagna rest for 10–15 minutes before cutting. This allows the layers to set and the juices to redistribute.

Garnish & Serve: Sprinkle with fresh chopped basil and serve with a crisp green salad.

Intensity & Timing Guide (At a Glance)
Phase Task Time Intensity Level
Prep Slicing & salting zucchini 20 mins Medium (Precision slicing)
Sauce Browning meat & simmering 15 mins Medium-High (Active stirring)
Mix Ricotta mixture 3 mins Low (Simple stirring)
Assemble Layering the dish 8 mins Low (Relaxed)
Bake Oven time & resting 35 mins Low (Hands-off)
Recipe Notes & Tips
The Water Rule: Zucchini is about 95% water. Salting and pre-roasting are non-negotiable steps if you want a lasagna that slices cleanly rather than pools in liquid. If you are short on time, at minimum salt and pat dry—but the roast is worth it.

No Boil, No Problem: Because the zucchini is pre-roasted, it is already tender before assembly, so it will not release water into the dish during baking.

Meatless Version: Swap the ground beef for 8 oz of finely chopped mushrooms and 1 cup of cooked lentils. Sauté the mushrooms with the onions until their moisture evaporates for a meaty texture.

Make-Ahead: Assemble the lasagna up to 24 hours ahead, cover, and refrigerate. Add 10 minutes to the covered baking time since it will go into the oven cold.

Freezer-Friendly: This lasagna freezes beautifully. Wrap individual portions tightly and freeze for up to 3 months. Reheat covered at 350°F (175°C) until heated through.

Cheese Tip: Freshly grated mozzarella (rather than pre-shredded) melts more smoothly and avoids the starchy coating that can make sauces grainy.

Nutrition Facts (Estimated)
Based on 6 servings (using 85% lean ground beef and whole-milk ricotta). Nutritional values are estimates and will vary based on specific ingredients used.

Calories: 342 kcal

Total Fat: 21g (Saturated Fat: 11g)

Cholesterol: 95mg

Sodium: 720mg

Total Carbohydrates: 14g (Dietary Fiber: 3g, Sugars: 8g)

Protein: 26g

Vitamin A: 25% DV

Vitamin C: 40% DV

Calcium: 35% DV

Iron: 15% DV