

## **Sausage and Bella Mushroom Tomato Sauce with Penne Pasta**

The sausage, mushroom, and hint of spice create a flavorful sauce and a wonderful aroma. It's the perfect meal for any evening.

### **Ingredients**

1 ½ pounds Mild Italian Sausage, casings removed  
1 pound bella mushrooms, sliced  
5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
1 large red bell pepper, seeded and chopped  
1 large white onion, chopped  
2 cloves garlic, chopped  
4 (14.5-15oz) cans diced tomatoes  
1 teaspoon red pepper flakes  
½ teaspoon salt  
2 tablespoons tomato paste  
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

### **Toppings**

Parmesan cheese, shaved  
Fresh basil, chopped

### **Preparation**

In a large cast iron or other large pot cook sausage over medium heat, breaking up and stirring until cooked through. Transfer to a bowl. Scrape off any brown bits from the pot using hot water if necessary. Add 2 tablespoons olive oil to pot on medium heat and sauté mushrooms until slightly softened, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and add to bowl of sausage. Add 3 tablespoons olive oil on medium-high heat to the pot and sauté onions and red bell peppers (adding a pinch of salt) until translucent, about 7-10 minutes. Add garlic and red pepper flakes and sauté 1 minute. Add tomatoes with their juices and bring mixture to a boil. Remove from heat and puree mixture with a hand blender. Place pot on a low simmer and stir in tomato paste, balsamic vinegar and salt. Add sausage and mushrooms and simmer stirring often, partially covered, 30 minutes.

Prepare penne pasta of your choice as instructed (I use whole wheat). Serve generous amount of sauce over penne pasta. Top with parmesan cheese and chopped basil.

Makes 8 -10 Servings

\*If you have fresh red plum tomatoes on hand you may incorporate them in the sauce. Use 2 pounds plum tomatoes, peeled and chopped with 2 cans (14.5-15oz) diced tomatoes. The fresh tomatoes will make the sauce lighter and thinner. To thicken the sauce to a good consistency, add an additional 2-3 tablespoons of tomato paste to the recipe.