

TWO KINDS OF RAGU

Makes enough to serve 6 to 8.

By Dennis W. Viau; modified from my mother's recipe.

Ragu is a chunky sauce, as opposed to marinara, which is a smooth sauce. The *Ragú* you see in jars in the grocery stores has about as much connection with real Italian ragu as hamburger has with filet mignon. There is a little confusion over the naming. You might also see ragoût. This French term refers to a chunky stew rather than a pasta sauce. Most ragu is made with meat, but where I grew up in New England there was one family that made their ragu with chopped vegetables. Substitute onions, bell peppers, zucchini, etc. for a vegan diet.



Sauce Ingredients:

1 28-ounce to 35-ounce (800g to 1kg) can San Marzano Italian plum tomatoes (see Note at end)
1 large clove garlic; minced
3 to 4 basil leaves; chopped
2 tablespoons finely chopped Italian parsley
Salt to taste

For Sausage Ragu:

About 2 tablespoons olive oil
12 Italian sausages, sweet and/or mild, about 3 pounds (1.4kg) total weight

For Beef Ragu:

About 2 tablespoons olive oil
1 medium onion
1 pound (450g) lean ground beef
1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon fresh grated nutmeg

Directions:

Place all the sauce ingredients in a large saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 1 to 1½ hours, stirring occasionally, breaking up the tomatoes with a wooden spoon as they become tender.

While the sauce is cooking...

For Sausage Ragu:

Submerge 8 of the Italian sausages in the sauce to cook. Remove the casings (skin) from the remaining 4 Italian sausages and break up the meat. Place in a heated skillet with olive and sauté until thoroughly cooked, about 5 minutes. When the sauce has finished cooking, remove the Italian sausages and set aside for another meal (or to serve on the side with your macaroni and ragu). Stir the cooked sausage meat into the sauce, test for salt, and serve with your favorite pasta.

For Beef Ragu:

Heat the oil in a large skillet and add the chopped onion. Sauté until caramelized, 20 to 30 minutes, reducing the heat as the moisture boils off. Add the ground beef. Season with nutmeg. Sauté until the beef is cooked, about 5 minutes. Drain fat and discard. Add to the sauce and serve with your favorite pasta.

The step-by-step photos were removed. See the video for the preparation.