

SPECIAL **Eats**

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South American Lasagna

This dish, inspired by my lovely Columbian friend, Sonia Middleton, uses ripe plantains in place of pasta. The sweet and savory combination is amazing and delicious!

Plantains look like large bananas and may be found green, yellow, yellow with black/brown spots or mostly black. Plantains are always cooked; never eaten raw. When green or yellow, plantains are very starchy, like a potato, and difficult to peel. As the plantain ripens its skin/peel thins and becomes easier to peel, and the flavor sweetens. This recipe requires ripe plantains with lots of black/brown on its skin. Plantains may be purchased green and allowed to ripen; know that it takes longer to ripen a plantain than a typical banana.

SERVES: 6-8

1 tablespoon olive oil	1 teaspoon oregano
1 large yellow onion, diced	1 teaspoon paprika,
3 cloves garlic, minced	1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
1-pound ground beef, grass fed (Hilltop Angus Farm)	1/4-1/2 teaspoon each sea salt and pepper (to taste)
1-pound chorizo sausage, raw, bulk, (Hilltop Angus Farm)	6-7 ripe plantains, sliced (ripe and
2 medium zucchini, diced	2 tablespoons coconut oil
1- 24-28 ounce can/jar/carton tomato sauce	1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
1/2 cup chopped green olives	1 cup Gruyere cheese, shredded
1/4 cup chopped, pitted dates	1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, grated

1. Prepare a 9" x 12" baking dish, rubbing with a small amount of oil.
2. In a large saucepan, heat olive oil over medium heat; add onions and sauté until softened, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and sauté for another minute.
3. Add ground beef and chorizo sausage and stir to break up into small pieces while cooking until no pink remains, about 8-10 minutes. Add zucchini and cook for 3 minutes.
4. Add tomato sauce, green olives, dates, oregano, paprika and smoked paprika and simmer for at least 15 minutes (longer cooking time thickens sauce and enhances flavor).
5. Taste and adjust seasoning adding salt and pepper to taste.
6. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
7. Combine the shredded sharp cheddar and Gruyere cheeses. Set aside.
8. Preparing plantains: cut off each end of the plantain; carefully cut a horizontal slit the length of the plantain. Peel the skin off. (I like to use gloves for handling plantains.) If the plantain is long and/or curved, it is easier to cut in half before slicing. Slice horizontally into 1/4-3/8" slices.

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9. In a large skillet, heat coconut oil over medium heat; sauté plantain slices for about 1 minute, turn over and sauté second side for 30 seconds. Ripe plantains cook faster than unripe. Remove cooked plantains and place on a paper towel-lined plate.
10. To assemble, arrange 1/3 of the plantains on the bottom of a lightly oiled 9x13 inch baking dish. Spread with 1/3 of the meat sauce. Top with half of the cheddar/Gruyere cheese. Add another layer of plantains, meat sauce, and the rest of the cheddar/Gruyere cheese. Finish with the rest of the plantains, meat sauce and top with grated Parmesan cheese.
11. Bake, uncovered in preheated 375-degree oven for 30 minutes. Cool for 10 minutes before serving (very important to let cool before cutting).