Pumpkin Lasagna

Serves 6

The Pumpkin

1 sugar pie pumpkin (about 3 lbs.)
4 tbsp. butter, melted
½ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. ground white pepper

Cut off the top of the pumpkin and peel it with a vegetable peeler (the skin should be thin enough to accomplish this without too much trouble). Cut off the bottom of the pumpkin, cut it in half and scoop out the seeds and strings. Cut in again into quarters, then slice into ¼" slices, first slicing the top and bottom bits, then turning it and slicing the rest vertically.

Put the pumpkins slices in a big bowl and toss with the melted butter, salt, and white pepper until evenly coated.

Heat a large frying pan over high heat. when the pan is good and hot, sear the pumpkin slices, in batches, until browned on both sides. Set the seared pumpkin aside until you are ready to assemble the lasagna.

The Bechamel Sauce

3 tbsp. butter
1/3 cup flour
3 ½ cups milk
¼ tsp. freshly ground nutmeg
1 tsp. salt
2 oz. 90% chocolate (or unsweetened, or 85 %)

Melt the butter in a large saucepan. Add the flour all at once and whisk to combine (it will be crumbly) Continue to heat over low heat, stirring occasionally until it turns nut brown. Add the cold milk all at once and whisk to combine. Continue to heat, stirring occasionally again, until the sauce becomes thick. Simmer about 5 minutes, then whisk in the nutmeg, salt, and chocolate. Remove from the heat and set aside until ready to use.

The Onion Garnish

1 large onion, finely diced
1 tbsp. olive oil

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½ tsp. salt
2 tbsp. finely chopped fresh sage
¾ cup dry white wine

In a medium sauté pan over med-high heat, heat the olive oil, then add the onion and salt. Sauté until onion is soft, add the sage and white wine. Reduce the wine until it is nearly dry. Set aside.

Final Assembly

1 package no-boil lasagna noodles
¾ lb. fontina cheese, grated
1 cup heavy cream
½ cup grated parmesan cheese

Okay, here we go assembling our masterpiece. Lightly oil your lasagna pan. The one I used for this made a small, but very tall lasagna (9" x 7" and 3" deep), but you could make it in a bigger pan with fewer layers if you wish.

First, spread a layer of bechamel sauce on the bottom (about a generous 1/2 cup) put a single layer of noodle over that, sprinkle 1/4 of the onions over the noodle. Spread a layer of grated fontina over that. Place pumpkin slices in a single snug layer over the cheese. Pour about ¼ to 1/3 cup cream over the pumpkin, then start all over, but this time reversing the bechamel and noodle i.e.: put the noodle over the cream, then bechamel, onion, fontina, pumpkin, cream, then again. Keep layering until you run out of stuff, but make sure to end with a layer of noodle covered with bechamel, onion (if you have any left), fontina, then finish with the parmesan.

Bake at 325° Fahrenheit for about one hour, until bubbling and brown around the edges. Let sit for at least 10 minutes before you slice into it. It will be gooey and want to spread out rather than stay in beautiful slices, but that's what makes it so good!

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