

The Classic Italian Cook Book
The Art of Italian Cooking and the Italian Art of Eating
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Marcella Hazan

Ragú as described by Ms. Hazan is "Bologna's meat sauce for seasoning its homemade pasta." She recommends that you sauté the meat just long enough to lose its raw color, **it's not** to be browned, you want it to remain delicate. The milk is added **before** the tomatoes. This will allow the meat to remain cream and sweet tasting. The sauce should barely simmer, minimum 3-1/2 hours, however, 5 hours is ideal.

For 6 servings, or 2-1/4 to 2-1/2 cups

2 tablespoons chopped yellow onion
3 tablespoons olive oil
3 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons chopped celery
2 tablespoons chopped carrot
¾ pound ground lean beef, preferably chuck or the meat from the neck
Salt
1 cup dry white wine
½ cup milk
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
2 cups canned Italian tomatoes, roughly chopped, with their juice*

1. An earthenware pot* should be your first choice for making ragú. If you don't have one available, use a heavy, enameled cast-iron casserole, the deepest one you have to keep the ragu from reducing too quickly). Put in the chopped onion, with all the oil and butter, and sauté briefly over medium heat until just translucent. Add the celery and carrot and cook gently for 2 minutes.
2. Add the ground beef, crumbing it in the pot with a fork. Add 1 teaspoon salt, stir, and cook only until the meat has lost its raw, red color. Add the wine, turn the up to medium high, and cook, stirring occasionally, until all the wine has evaporated.
3. Turn the heat down to medium, add the milk and the nutmeg, and cook until the milk has evaporated. Stir frequently.
4. When the milk has evaporated, add the tomatoes and stir thoroughly. When the tomatoes have started to bubble, turn the heat down until the sauce cooks at the laziest simmer, just an occasional bubble. Cook, uncovered, for a minimum of 3-1/2 to 4 hours, stirring occasionally. Taste and correct for salt. (If you cannot watch the sauce for such a long stretch, you can turn off the heat and resume cooking it later on. But do finish cooking it in one day.)

Note: Ragú can be kept in the refrigerator for up to 5 days, or frozen. Reheat until it simmers for about 15 minutes before using.

*For this recipe, I substituted ground venison. I used Wegmans Italian Classics San Marzano Tomato of Agro Sarnese-Nocerino Area (\$3.99 per can). As I was doubling the recipe, I used my crock pot and set the temperature on low.