

1950's Goulash

Serves 8 to 10

NOTE: You will note that there is no salt added separately for seasoning - the canned tomatoes, Worcestershire sauce and top-quality cheese add enough salt for our family's palate, and keeps the taste fresh and light. Adjust for salt at the end.

2 cups elbow macaroni, uncooked

4 cups cooking water from the macaroni
2 (15-ounce) cans tomato sauce
2 (15-ounce) cans seasoned diced tomatoes
2 tablespoons Italian seasoning
2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
3/4 tsp. ground black pepper
3 bay leaves

2 pounds lean ground beef

2 large yellow onions, chopped
1 large green bell pepper, diced

Grated best-quality parmesan or grana padano cheese for garnish

Cook the macaroni in salted boiling water until 3/4 done BUT SAVE 4 CUPS OF THE COOKING LIQUID, discarding the rest. To the retained cooking liquid, add the tomato sauce, diced tomatoes, and seasonings. Blend well and set aside. Keep the almost-cooked macaroni in another bowl (or still in the strainer) separate from the tomato-cooking liquid mixture.

In a Dutch oven, saute the ground beef (maybe with a very little bit of vegetable oil) over medium-high heat until no pink remains. Break up the meat while sauteing. Drain thoroughly, remove the meat from the cooking pot and put the meat on top of the cooling macaroni - no need to blend the two. Or put the beef on a plate - just don't add it to the tomato-cooking liquid mixture.

In the Dutch oven, saute the onions and bell pepper in a little vegetable oil until it just starts to get brown on the edges. Add everything else to the Dutch oven, and stir well. Cover and bring to a boil; reduce heat to low, cover and simmer about 30 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes or so. Turn off the heat, remove the bay leaves, and let sit about 30 minutes more before serving. Taste for salt and adjust if needed.