



Caramelized Seared Vegetable Ragu

Lightly charred for a deep rich flavor

- 2 to 3 fresh carrots (4 ounces)
- 2 to 3 fresh celery stalks (4 ounces)
- 3 Tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 4 ounces fresh brussels sprouts, trimmed, halved
- 1 onion, peeled, quartered, sliced
- 1 (8 ounce) package cremini mushrooms, quartered, sliced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 6 Tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1/2 cup red wine
- 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 cups vegetable stock as needed
- Salt; ground black pepper to taste
- 4 ounces pappardelle noodles, cooked
- Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, grated or Nutritional Yeast as desired

As desired: Fresh torn basil leaves

Sear Carrots and Celery: Cut carrots and celery in half lengthwise; then cut each into thirds; toss in about 1 Tablespoon oil. Heat lightly greased 12-inch skillet over medium high heat. Add carrots and celery pieces; cover; cook for about 5 minutes; stir; continue cooking 2 minutes or until vegetables are lightly seared. Remove from skillet to dish to stay warm.

Sear Brussels' Sprouts, Half of Onions and Mushrooms: Add Tablespoon oil to skillet; place brussels sprouts, cut side down in pan; add half of onions and half of mushrooms to skillet; cover pan; cook for about 4 to 5 minutes; toss vegetables; continue cooking another 2 minutes or until tender and lightly seared. Remove brussels sprouts to separate dish; add seared mushrooms and onions to carrots and celery. Set aside.

Chop Ragu Vegetables: Place seared vegetables in food processor; pulse until chopped; set aside.

Prepare Ragu Vegetable Sauce: Place 1 Tablespoon oil to hot skillet; add remaining mushrooms and onions to skillet; cover; cook, stirring once, for 4 or 5 minutes to sear. Stir in minced garlic; cook 1 minute. Stir in tomato paste and Italian seasoning for about 1 minute. Add wine and 1-1/2 cups vegetable stock, stir constantly until combined, about 1 minute. Slowly stir in the chopped seared vegetables from the food processor. Add the seared brussels sprouts; season with salt and black pepper as desired. Add more vegetable stock if needed. Stir in the al dente cooked noodles to coat.

To Serve: Sprinkle top lightly with grated cheese or nutritional yeast; garnish with torn fresh basil leaves. Serve warm.

Yield: serves 4 to 6

Cook's Note: You can also cook the noodles right in the boiling vegetable stock for 3 minutes but make sure you add enough stock to cover the noodles. To save time, sear the vegetables ahead of time or quick broil them in the oven. I used noodles from al dente Pasta Company.

About the Recipe: The sauce is richly flavored with the seared vegetables, tomato sauce, and red wine. As you add the layers of vegetables, it almost tastes like it was cooking for hours. Add the wide noodles that will cling to the robust flavor of the saucy Ragu.

