

SPICY SAUSAGE RAGU NACHOS WITH PICKLED ONIONS

Prepared by: Laura Lutz, April 2018

Source: Foodnetwork.com

FOR THE RAGU

3 cloves garlic, smashed
2 stalks celery, diced
2 onions, diced
1 small fennel bulb, top and core removed, diced
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt
2 cups tomato paste
2 cups hearty red wine
2 pounds spicy Italian sausage, casings removed
2 bay leaves
1 bunch thyme, tied with butcher's twine

FOR THE PICKED ONIONS:

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup red wine vinegar
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons sugar
Kosher salt
2 to 3 dashes hot sauce (such as Tabasco)
1 red onion, sliced into thin rings

TO ASSEMBLE:

1 large bag corn tortilla chips
 $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
 $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup grated fontina cheese
1 chipotle chile in adobo sauce, chopped, plus 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons sauce from the can
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (4 ounces) mascarpone cheese
1 cup packed arugula

Make the ragu: Put the garlic, celery, onions and fennel in a food processor and puree to make a coarse paste. Coat a wide, deep pan with the olive oil and put over medium-high heat. Add the pureed veggies and season with salt; cook until all the liquid has evaporated and the veggies begin to stick to the pan—you want to brown the crap out of these guys until crud starts to form on the bottom of the pan. Stir occasionally to scrape up the browned bits, then let the crud form again. Be patient here and don't rush it: This is where the big flavor develops; it will take up to 30 minutes.

When the lovely brown crud has formed and been scraped down a couple of times, stir in the tomato paste. Let it start to brown a little, stirring, 2 to 3 minutes. There's not much liquid at this point to keep things from burning, so move fast: add the wine, stir to combine and scrape up any remaining browned bits. Cook until about half the wine has evaporated, 4 to 5 minutes.

Add the sausage and cook, breaking it up with a wooden spoon, until browned, 10 to 15 minutes. (This is where another round of big flavor is formed, so take your time.)

Add enough water to cover the meat by about ½ inch. Stir to combine well, then add the bay leaves and thyme bundle. Taste, season with salt and taste again; it's by no mean done, but it should taste good. Bring the sauce to a boil and reduce to a simmer. Continue cooking for 3 hours, tasting, seasoning and adding more water as needed. Discard the bay leaves and thyme.

Meanwhile, make the pickled onions: Combine the vinegar, ½ cup cold water, the sugar, 1 tablespoon salt and the hot sauce in a bowl. Add the sliced onion and let sit, at least 1 hour. Drain.

Assemble the nachos: Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spread a layer of tortilla chips on an ovenproof platter. Top with a layer of the ragu and cover with the parmigiano and fontina cheeses. Bake until the cheeses melt, 5 to 10 minutes. Meanwhile, mix the chopped chipotle, adobo sauce and mascarpone in a bowl. Sprinkle the arugula over the nachos and finish with dollops of the chipotle mascarpone and the pickled onions. A gooey cheesy treat. Delish.

Laura's Notes: "I added extra red wine. This was super easy and I would make it again. The ragu could be served over noodles."

