

Baked Eggs

with Sausage and Mushrooms

Total Time: 20 min (prep), 30 min (cook) **Serves:** 4

Ingredients

- Extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, smashed
- 1 pinch of crushed red pepper flakes
- 1/2 lb. Italian sausage, casings removed
- 1/2 lb. good mushrooms (portabello, cremini, shitake, etc.)
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 4 eggs
- 4 oz. Gruyere cheese, grated
- 4 ramekins (6 oz. are an ideal size)

Directions

Preheat your oven to 400 degrees.

Begin by smashing your garlic. Do not chop the garlic because you will be removing it. Just turn your knife on its side on top of the clove and give it a strong whack!

Coat a cold saute pan with olive oil (probably 2 tablespoons or so). Toss in the smashed garlic and red pepper flakes. Heat the pan over medium heat. As the garlic enjoys its warm oil jacuzzi, chop up the mushrooms into medium bite-size pieces. Your favorite mushroom will work here - just pick one you like. I like all three of the ones noted in the ingredient list above.

Once the garlic has turned a beautiful golden brown (and your kitchen smells *AH*-mazing!), pluck out all the garlic pieces, leaving the oil and red pepper flakes in the pan. Toss the garlic -- it has fulfilled its garlic destiny.

Add the sausage to the pan. Begin to break up the meat with a wooden spoon until it is browned (no trichinosis here!). Once the sausage has browned nicely, toss in the mushrooms and a couple good pinches of kosher salt (probably 1-2 teaspoons) and stir everything together.

Cook the mixture until the mushrooms have softened. Pour in the white wine and scrape up all the little bits of sausage and mushroom that may have stuck to the bottom of the pan as you mix everything together.

While the wine is cooking down, brush the inside of the ramekins with more olive oil and arrange them on a baking sheet or roasting pan.

When most of the wine has been absorbed, take the pan off the heat and evenly distribute the mixture between the four ramekins, pressing the mixture gently into the bottom of each one.

Crack one egg into each ramekin. *Be gentle!* Breaking the yolk here ruins the dish, so take care not to be too rough. Sprinkle a few drops of olive oil on top of each egg and place them into your preheated oven. Bake for 8 minutes.

While they're baking, get your cheese ready. I prefer a strong-flavored cheese, like Gruyere, that will melt beautifully and stand up to the flavor of the sausage and mushroom mixture. If you can't find Gruyere (or don't want to spend the money for it), try provolone or mozzarella mixed with a bit of Parmesan. Not as good, but totally worthy.

After the initial 8-minute bake, sprinkle each ramekin with an ounce (or so) of the grated cheese.

Place them back in the oven for 5 more minutes.

NOTE: Although oven temperatures may vary, i recommend you follow these baking times exactly. Do NOT bake any longer than indicated, even if you get a little scared or anxious about getting the egg whites cooked thoroughly. I promise, they will be cooked! If you bake any longer than 5 minutes at this point, your yolks will harden ...and a hard yolk is no fun!

Once the cheese has melted and begun to bubble (and the 5 minutes is up), they're done!

I like to serve them with a few pieces of garlic toast on the side so you have something to sop up all the yummy, runny egg.

This is a perfect dish for a family brunch because you can make as many as you like. Or you can make a couple per person and serve it for dinner! (I can easily eat 2 or 3 of these at once...) Enjoy!