

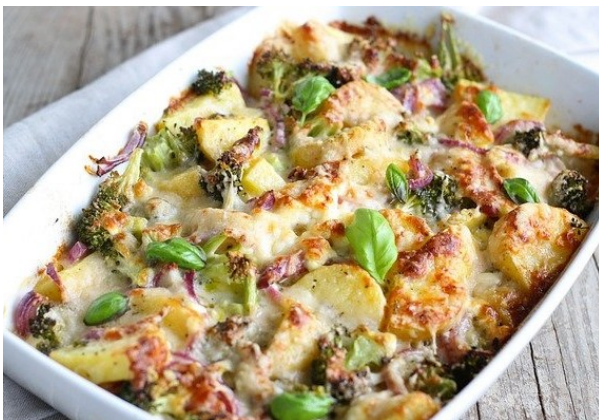
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[HOME](#)[FAMILY](#)[FOOD & HEALTH](#)[HEALTHY HOME](#)[MONEY](#)[ABOUT US](#)

You are here: [Home](#) / [Food & Health](#) / Create Your Own Casserole

Create Your Own Casserole

DECEMBER 17, 2020 BY MARY ELLEN FLEMING



Leftovers anyone? With the holidays upon us we find ourselves with an abundance of leftovers and extra ingredients. What to do? Make a casserole! This changes up the flavor and reduces waste of those leftovers. It is also a quick and easy method of preparing a meal.

History

Where did the term casserole come from? It is French for saucepan, though the concept of meat slow cooked with vegetables and fruits in a lidded clay pot dates to prehistory. Today a casserole dish can be made of glass, ceramic, or porcelain. Or you can use a 12" x 9" metal cake pan. If

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Making a Casserole

Look through ingredients you have on hand such as onions, carrots, [garlic](#), chicken stock, canned tomatoes, [mushrooms](#), pasta or rice, fresh and dried herbs. Using flour, milk, butter, and cheese, you can quickly whip up a white or cheese sauce to bind the casserole together.

Grease a large casserole dish (at least 2 quarts) and begin layering ingredients from the following categories. You can also create 2 smaller casseroles and [freeze](#) one (unbaked) for use later. Place a label on the covering of the casserole with the name of the dish and directions for baking after thawing. Wrap tightly with [plastic wrap and/or aluminum foil](#) and use within 6 months.



Protein: (2 cups cooked)

- Ground beef
- Diced chicken, turkey, ham, beef, or pork
- Canned fish or seafood, flaked
- Chopped hard-cooked egg
- Canned [beans](#) (kidney, pinto, etc.), drained

Starch: (2 cups cooked)

- Pasta
- Long-grain or [brown rice](#)
- Potatoes
- [Sweet potatoes](#)
- Quinoa
- Corn tortillas



Vegetables:

- 10 oz. pkg. thaws and drained frozen spinach, broccoli, green beans, green peas
- 16 oz. can green beans, peas, carrots, [corn](#), drained
- 2 cups sliced fresh zucchini
- Canned or fresh diced tomatoes
- Green Chile

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Select one sauce to use for the casserole. You will need at least 2 cups of sauce.

- White sauce
 - Quick White Sauce
 - 4 tablespoons butter
 - 3 ½ – 4 Tablespoons flour
 - 2 cups milk, or 1 cup milk and 1 cup stock

Melt butter over low heat. Add flour and stir 3 to 4 minutes until well blended. Slowly add milk or milk and stock. Simmer and stir the sauce with a wire whisk until it has thickened and is smooth and hot. For cheese sauce, add 1 – ½ cups grated cheese and stir till melted.

- 1 can sauce-type soup (mushroom, celery, cheese, tomato, etc.) mixed with milk to make 2 cups
- Tomato or marinara sauce
- Leftover gravy

Flavor:

- ½ cup chopped celery, ¼ cup chopped onion, ¼ cup sliced black olives
- 1 – 2 tsp. mixed dried leaf herbs (basil, thyme, marjoram, tarragon)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Cover and bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 50 minutes to an hour, or microwave using 50% power for about 15 to 30 minutes, rotating or stirring as necessary. Heat until steaming hot (165 degrees Fahrenheit throughout.)

Topping:

After heating if desired, place on top:

- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- ¼ cup shredded Swiss, Cheddar, or Monterey Jack cheese
- Breadcrumbs sprinkled lightly across the top
- ¼ to ½ cup canned fried onion rings