



Layered Chicken Three-Cheese Enchilada

Use your favorite enchilada sauce to prepare this recipe, which layers corn tortillas, chicken and three kinds of cheese into one hearty casserole.

Preheat an oven to 350°F.

In a large nonstick sauté pan over medium-high heat, warm the olive oil. Add the onion, season with salt and pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is soft, 6 to 7 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool.

Add the chicken to the onion and stir well to combine.

Spread ¼ cup of the enchilada sauce on the bottom of a 3½-quart round wide Dutch oven. Arrange 3 tortillas in a single layer on the sauce, overlapping them as needed to cover the sauce. Top with a generous 1 cup of the chicken-onion mixture, ½ cup of the sauce and ¼ cup of each cheese. Repeat the layering 2 more times, alternating the direction of the tortilla layers and finishing with ½ cup sauce and ¼ cup of each cheese.

Transfer to the oven and bake until the ingredients are heated through and the cheese is melted, about 30 minutes. Remove from the oven and garnish with green onions and cilantro. Serves 4 to 6.

Williams-Sonoma Kitchen

1 Tbs. olive oil
 1 yellow onion, cut into ½-inch dice
 Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
 1¼ lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cooked and shredded
 1¾ cups red enchilada sauce
 9 corn tortillas, each about 6 inches in diameter
 ¾ cup shredded mozzarella cheese
 ¾ cup shredded white cheddar cheese
 ¾ cup shredded yellow cheddar cheese
 Sliced green onion tops for garnish
 Chopped fresh cilantro for garnish

Baked Sausages with Herbed Beans

This rustic casserole comes together in minutes and finishes in the oven, leaving you with just enough time to toss a mixed green salad and open a bottle of light red wine to serve alongside.

Preheat an oven to 400°F.

In a large, heavy ovenproof pot over medium-high heat, warm 1 Tbs. of the olive oil. Add the sausages and cook, turning occasionally, until browned on all sides, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a plate. Add 1 Tbs. of the olive oil and the onions to the pot and sauté until softened, about 4 minutes. Add the garlic and thyme and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Pour in the broth and bring to a simmer. Add the beans with their liquid and the tomato puree and cook until the liquid begins to thicken, about 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Return the sausages to the pot.

In a small bowl, stir together the bread crumbs, cheese and the 1 tsp. olive oil. Sprinkle the bread crumb mixture over the top of the bean mixture and bake until golden brown, about 20 minutes. Let cool slightly before serving. Serves 4.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *One Pot of the Day*, by Kate McMillan (Weldon Owen, 2012).

2 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. olive oil
 4 large hot or sweet Italian sausages, about 1 lb. total
 2 large yellow onions, halved and thinly sliced
 2 garlic cloves, minced
 2 Tbs. chopped fresh thyme
 1 cup chicken broth
 2 cans (each 15 oz.) cannellini beans
 ¼ cup tomato puree
 Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
 ¼ cup fresh bread crumbs
 ¼ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

Modern Comforts—The New Casserole

There's nothing that satisfies hearty appetites like a warm and comforting casserole. From baked pastas and enchiladas to hearty vegetarian casseroles, these dishes are ideal for weekdays or when you're entertaining a large group. Assemble the ingredients in advance and then pop the pan into the oven just before your guests arrive—they'll be greeted with the enticing aromas emanating from the kitchen. Round out the meal with a tossed green salad and a loaf of crusty bread.

The casserole, a savory baked dish that combines two or more ingredients and can be eaten with a fork alone, is an American culinary standard—a preparation that gained popularity with the busy cooks in the 1950s and has never lost its appeal. The same term is used for the deep ovenproof dish in which the food is cooked. Such dishes often have lids and may be round, oval, rectangular or square. They can be made from any number of materials, ranging from tempered glass to earthenware to porcelain to stoneware to enameled cast iron.

All casserole dishes are oven safe, but not all are meant to be used on top of the stove. Make sure you know which are flame resistant, either by reading the tags when you buy them or by using common sense: pottery casseroles usually are not meant for stovetop cooking, while shock- and heat-resistant glass ones, such as Pyrex, are. Many casserole dishes can go directly from the refrigerator or freezer into a hot oven without cracking. These are usually dishwasher safe, too.

Noodles and rice are common casserole ingredients and are often combined with a thick, creamy sauce. Classic casseroles include tuna noodle and macaroni and cheese. Healthy choices for casseroles are now becoming more popular, such as whole grains like quinoa and farro, as well as legumes, such as black beans and cannellini beans. These and many other recipes can be baked in casserole dishes that can go directly from the oven to the table for serving.

Casseroles are great favorites with cooks who like or need to plan ahead, since many of these dishes freeze well. They can be cooked thoroughly, allowed to cool just to room temperature, covered with foil or the casserole lid, and frozen. Most can be reheated directly from the freezer in a moderate (350°F) oven for about an hour, or until bubbling hot. If you want to brown the top, uncover the dish during the final 10 to 15 minutes of cooking. Casseroles can also be frozen uncooked and then baked before serving (see Make-Ahead Tips, next page).

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Make-Ahead Tips

Prepare casseroles in advance for easy weeknight suppers. Follow these simple steps for freezing and thawing foods safely.

Wrap properly: When freezing casseroles, try to use baking dishes that are freezer-to-oven safe so you don't have to transfer the food to another vessel before baking. Use only moisture-proof wrappings, such as aluminum foil, airtight plastic containers and resealable freezer-weight plastic bags. Choose plastic containers that can be filled almost to the brim with liquids; leave some room for expansion but not so much that the container holds excess air. Enclose other foods in a double layer of wrapping and expel as much air as possible before sealing. Vacuum-sealing before freezing provides the best option for removing all of the air, thus preventing crystallization and freezer burn.

Label clearly: Use a permanent marker to label all packages or containers with the contents and today's date before you put them in the freezer. You can also add a "use-by" date.

Thaw safely: To preserve the texture of frozen meat, poultry and fish, and to prevent the growth of bacteria, always thaw these foods in the refrigerator. Vegetables can be thawed at room temperature, if necessary. Thaw casseroles overnight in the refrigerator before baking unless the recipe directs to bake the dish while still frozen.

<p>1 head garlic Olive oil as needed Kosher salt, to taste 1 lb. elbow macaroni 4 bacon slices 3 large shallots, finely chopped 2 Tbs. all-purpose flour 4 cups heavy cream 2 tsp. fresh thyme leaves 2 cups grated smoked cheddar cheese 1 cup grated Monterey jack cheese Freshly ground pepper, to taste ½ cup crumbled corn bread 2 Tbs. unsalted butter, melted</p>	<h3>Big Phil's Mac 'n' Cheese</h3> <p>Preheat an oven to 350°F. Butter a 13-by-9-inch baking dish.</p> <p>Cut the top ½ inch off the head of garlic and discard. Place the trimmed head on a small piece of foil, drizzle with a little olive oil and sprinkle with a pinch of salt. Wrap the garlic in the foil and roast for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Remove the foil and let the garlic cool. (The garlic can be wrapped in plastic and refrigerated for up to 1 month.) Increase the oven temperature to 400°F.</p> <p>In a large pot of heavily salted boiling water, cook the pasta until it is al dente. Drain the pasta and reserve.</p> <p>In a large heavy fry pan over medium heat, cook the bacon until it is crisp, 6 to 8 minutes. Transfer the bacon to paper towels to drain, and pour off all but 2 Tbs. of the bacon fat from the pan.</p> <p>Add the shallots to the pan and cook, stirring occasionally, until they are browned, 6 to 8 minutes. Squeeze the garlic cloves out of their skins and into the pan. Stir in the flour and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Whisk in the cream and bring to a boil. Cook the sauce, whisking occasionally, until it is thickened and reduced by one-third, about 10 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the thyme, cheddar cheese and jack cheese. Season the sauce with salt and pepper.</p> <p>Toss the pasta with the cheese sauce and transfer to the prepared baking dish. In a small bowl, stir together the corn bread crumbs and melted butter, then sprinkle evenly over the mac 'n' cheese. Bake the mac 'n' cheese until the bread crumbs are golden and the mac 'n' cheese is bubbling, about 30 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes, then crumble the bacon over the top and serve. Serves 8.</p> <p><small>Adapted from <i>The Farm</i>, by Ian Knauer (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012).</small></p>
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For the bulgur:
¾ cup water
½ tsp. kosher salt
¾ cup cracked bulgur wheat

For the red pepper tomato sauce:
2 Tbs. olive oil
½ yellow onion, finely chopped
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
3 roasted red bell peppers, minced
6 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 can (28 oz.) pureed tomatoes
¾ cup thinly sliced fresh basil or chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, plus more for garnish
½ cup dried currants
Sugar, to taste (optional)

For the eggplant casserole:
2 lb. eggplant, cut into ½-inch slices
2 Tbs. olive oil
Kosher salt, to taste
3 garlic cloves, minced
1 cup plain, whole-milk, Greek-style yogurt
½ cup slivered almonds or pine nuts

Eggplant Casserole with Pine Nut-Yogurt Sauce

Poor eggplant, it always seems to be typecast in the kitchen, being constantly fried or breaded. In this healthy yet hearty Mediterranean-flavored casserole, it combines with tangy yogurt, earthy pine nuts, nutty bulgur and a sweet tomato sauce for a new starring role.

To prepare the bulgur, in a small saucepan over high heat, combine the water and salt and bring to a boil. Add the bulgur, stir to combine and remove from the heat. Cover and let sit until the bulgur is tender and swelled up, 20 to 30 minutes. (Tip: The bulgur can be made up to 2 days ahead. Refrigerate until ready to use.)

Meanwhile, prepare the sauce: In a medium saucepan over medium heat, warm the olive oil. When it shimmers, add the onion, season well with salt and pepper, and cook until soft and translucent, about 5 minutes.

Add the roasted peppers and cook, stirring occasionally, until they just begin to color, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and tomato puree and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until the sauce is slightly thickened and the flavors are melded, 15 to 20 minutes. When the sauce is ready, stir in the basil and currants. Taste and adjust the seasonings as needed with sugar, salt or pepper. Remove from the heat and set aside. (Tip: The sauce can be made up to 2 days ahead. Refrigerate until ready to use.)

Meanwhile, cook the eggplant: Preheat a broiler and position a rack in the top of the oven. Brush the eggplant with the olive oil and season with salt. Arrange the slices on a rimmed baking sheet and broil until golden brown, about 15 minutes. Remove from the oven and set aside. Reduce the oven temperature to 375°F.

To assemble the casserole, spoon one-fourth of the sauce (about 1 cup) on the bottom of a 9-inch square baking dish. Lay one-third of the eggplant slices over the sauce. Spread all the bulgur over the eggplant. Repeat the layering of the sauce and eggplant, ending with the sauce (you'll have 4 layers of sauce and 3 of eggplant, with a layer of bulgur in the middle).

Place the garlic on a cutting board and sprinkle a pinch of salt on top. Chop the mixture until it is a rough paste. Stir the garlic into the yogurt. Spread over the sauce in an even layer on top of the casserole. Scatter the nuts over the yogurt. Bake until cooked through but not bubbling, 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and let rest for 5 minutes. Garnish with basil. Serve hot or at room temperature. (Tip: The casserole can be assembled up to 2 days before baking and can be baked up to 2 days ahead. Bring to room temperature before serving.) Serves 6.

Adapted from *Aida Mollenkamp's Keys to the Kitchen* by Aida Mollenkamp (Chronicle Books, 2012).