



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Family Matters

Improving Health Together

January 2024 Newsletter

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cooperating.

Casserole: the quick dinner

By Carla Farrand, Family and Consumer Science Specialist, Garfield County

Winter nights are filled with many activities from sports and 4-H meetings to afterschool clubs. Finding time to plan and prepare dinner can be a challenge. However, having a few tricks in the pantry to make a quick casserole for dinner or even prepare them on the weekends and freezing them will save time on those busy weeknights.



Calling all family members to help choose, chop, tear, and mix or layer ingredients in these tasty and nourishing dishes.

Basics Ingredients for a Casserole

There are five basic ingredients to consider when making casseroles.

- 1. Protein.** Choose one or a combination of proteins.
 - 8 ounces cooked chicken, turkey, lean beef, fish, or shellfish
 - 2 cups cooked lentils, beans, or split peas
 - 12 ounces Tofu
- 2. Vegetables.** Choose a variety of vegetables.
 - 2 to 3 cups sliced, chopped, or diced vegetables
- 3. Grain or Noodles.** Choose either cooked pasta or grain.
 - 4 cups cooked pasta
 - 2 cups cooked rice, barley, or quinoa
- 4. Sauce.** A sauce helps bring the dish together and provides the moisture needed for baking.
 - 1 ½ to 2 cups canned soup
 - 1 can (16 ounces) diced tomatoes, pasta sauce, or enchilada sauce
 - Homemade white, cream or cheese sauce
- 5. Toppings.** Choose one or try a variety to create something new.
 - ½ cup breadcrumbs, shredded low-fat cheese, crushed cornflakes, or corn chips
 - 2 tablespoons chopped herbs such as parsley, cilantro, or green onion

This link takes you to a CSU Extension casserole making guide. [https://foodsmartcolorado.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Meal-Planning-with-Confidence -Casserole.pdf](https://foodsmartcolorado.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Meal-Planning-with-Confidence-Casserole.pdf)

Helping families increase physical activity and enjoy healthy foods ...

Finding Recipes

Casserole recipes can be found in many places from <https://myplate.gov> to <https://foodsmartcolorado.colostate.edu/>. You can even find some recipes on packages of pasta or cans of soups.



Some of my favorite recipes for casseroles have been passed down through the family as easy ways my mom could prepare a hot dinner while we kids were doing homework.

Look for recipes that have:

- Foods from multiple food groups (fruits, vegetable, protein, grain, and milk)
- Fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables
- Include whole grains such as brown rice, whole-wheat bread, or oatmeal
- Contain a lean protein such as legumes, beans, skinless chicken, or lean cuts of meat
- Incorporate a non-fat or low-fat dairy product or fortified nondairy option. Or serve with a calcium fortified beverage
- Casseroles can be made in smaller pans and frozen. They can be put in the refrigerator to thaw the night before you want to cook them.

Let's Talk

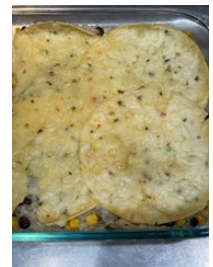
Children who are involved in the process of making food, like a family casserole, are more likely to eat it and enjoy the act of cooking. By letting children decide the ingredients and helping prepare, mix, or layer the food, they become invested in the dish being tasty. Let them pick from options you present from the major food groups.

Recipe for Health

Enchilada Casserole

Ingredients:

- 1-15 oz can of green enchilada sauce
- 1-15 oz can pinto beans, (drained and rinsed)
- 2 cups rice (brown or white), cooked
- 1-15 oz can corn (drained) or 1 ½ cups frozen corn (thawed)
- 12 corn tortillas
- 10 ounces Monterey Jack Cheese (2 ½ cups shredded)



Directions:

1. Wash hands and food contact surfaces with soap and water.
2. Preheat oven to 350°F.
3. Drain and rinse the beans and corn (if using canned corn).
4. In a large skillet or saucepan, mix the enchilada sauce, beans, cooked rice, and corn. Bring to a simmer.
5. Place half of the hot mixture on the bottom of a 9 x 13 pan or split it between two 9-inch square or round pans.
6. Spread the corn tortillas evenly over the mixture. Place remaining mixture on top of the tortillas.
7. Top mixture with cheese, and cover with foil. Bake for 25-30 minutes.
8. Remove foil and bake for 10 more minutes until cheese is melted and sauce is bubbly.
9. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours. Eat within 3 to 5 days.

Options: Add 8 ounces cooked chicken or turkey with the enchilada sauce mixture for something different. If making 2 pans, freeze one for use later.

Recipe adapted from: Eating Smart, Being Active, Colorado State University; <https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/enchilada-casserole>

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