Casseroles: An Easy, Make-Ahead Meal

Use the guide below to choose your ingredients. To cook, season with salt and pepper or other spices, to taste. Bake at 350°F for 40-60 minutes or until top is brown and bubbly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protein</th>
<th>Vegetables</th>
<th>Sauce (choose one)</th>
<th>Whole Grains</th>
<th>Toppings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 cup, fully cooked Beef (lean cuts), cubed or ground</td>
<td>Greens (kale, spinach, chard) Mixed vegetables (such as carrots, peas and corn) Zucchini Mushrooms Broccoli</td>
<td>Low-fat or nonfat cream soup, such as mushroom, celery, or tomato (10 ounce can) + ¼ cup nonfat milk Diced tomatoes (14.5oz can, drained — approx. 1 cup) + ¼ cup reduced-fat sour cream (optional)</td>
<td>Brown rice Whole wheat pasta Barley Quinoa Cubed whole wheat bread (1 cup)</td>
<td>Grated low-fat cheese Bread crumbs Crushed corn flakes Crushed tortilla chips</td>
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</tbody>
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Casserole Ideas:

- **Chicken, Rice & Broccoli**: 1 cup diced, cooked chicken + 1½ cups chopped, blanched broccoli + 1½ cups cooked brown rice + 1 cup cream of mushroom soup + ¼ cup nonfat milk + ½ cup shredded low-fat cheese on top.

- **Smoked Turkey & Spinach**: 1 cup diced, smoked turkey + 1½ cups chopped spinach + ½ cup chopped mushrooms + 1½ cups cooked barley + 1 cup cream of celery soup + ¼ cup nonfat milk + ½ cup shredded low-fat cheese on top.

- **Mexican Black Beans & Rice**: 1 cup black beans + 1½ cups chopped spinach + ½ cup corn + 1½ cups cooked brown rice + 1 cup diced tomatoes + ½ cup low-fat sour cream + ½ teaspoon ground cumin + ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper + ½ cup shredded low-fat cheese on top.

**Chef’s Tips:**

- **Vegetables**: Cook firmer veggies like carrots or broccoli, and heartier greens like kale or collards, for 3–4 minutes in boiling water. Drain well before adding to casserole. If using canned or thawed frozen vegetables, drain them well. You don’t need to cook them before adding.

- **Whole Grains**: Cook grains according to package instructions ahead of time. Refrigerate and add to casseroles you make that week.

- **Toppings**: Toppings like bread crumbs, corn flakes, or tortilla chips may brown quickly. Cover the casserole loosely with foil while cooking. Remove the foil for the last 5–10 minutes.