

Crock Pot Pizza Casserole: Easy & Cheesy Family Dinner

ground beef, Italian sausage, and zesty pizza sauce



OVEN
300°F

TIME
5 min

METHOD
Slow cooker

PRINT
Recipe Card

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound rigatoni
- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 1 pound ground Italian sausage (sweet or spicy)
- 1 small sweet onion, diced
- 3.5 ounce package pepperoni
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 (14 ounce) jars pizza sauce
- 16 ounce bag shredded mozzarella

Chopped parsley (for garnish), optional

Swaps and Notes:

Pasta: Rigatoni is great for holding the sauce, but you can use other pasta shapes like penne, ziti, or even rotini.

Ground Meats: The combination of ground beef and Italian sausage provides fantastic flavor depth.

You can use all beef, all sausage, or even ground turkey for a leaner option. Adjust seasoning if you change the meat.

Pepperoni: Mini pepperonis are great for distributing evenly. You can also use sliced turkey pepperoni or omit it if preferred.

Onion: A sweet onion will soften nicely and add a mild sweetness. Yellow onion works too.

Pizza Sauce: Use your favorite brand of jarred pizza sauce for convenience. You can also use plain crushed tomatoes and add your own Italian seasonings, salt, and a pinch of sugar.

Mozzarella Cheese: Pre-shredded mozzarella is a time-saver. You can also grate a block of whole-milk mozzarella for a gooier melt.

Optional Add-ins: Feel free to add other pizza toppings you love, such as diced bell peppers, sliced mushrooms, black olives, or even a handful of spinach.

DIRECTIONS

1. **Let's get this delicious and easy :** Crock Pot Pizza Casserole simmering!
2. **Prepare :** Slow Cooker: Spray a 6-quart or larger slow cooker generously with cooking spray. Set it aside.
3. **Cook :** Pasta: Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the rigatoni and cook according to the package directions until it is al dente (still slightly firm to the bite). It's important not to overcook it, as it will continue to cook in the slow cooker. Drain the pasta well and set it aside.
4. **Brown :** Meats and Onion: While the rigatoni is cooking, place a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the lean ground beef and ground Italian sausage to the skillet. Use a spoon or meat chopper to break up the meat into small crumbles. Add the diced sweet onion to the pan with the meat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions have softened and there is no pink left in the meat. Drain any excess fat from the pan.
5. **Add :** Pepperoni and Garlic: Lower the heat to medium-low. Add the package of pepperoni and the minced garlic to the pan with the cooked meat and onions. Stir everything in well and continue to cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. This allows the pepperoni to release its flavor and the garlic to become fragrant.
6. **Combine :** Filling: Drain the meat mixture very well to remove any remaining grease. Transfer the drained mixture to a large mixing bowl. Add the three (14 ounce) jars of pizza sauce to the bowl and stir thoroughly to combine everything.

7. Coat : Pasta: Add the cooked al dente pasta to the large bowl with the meat and sauce mixture. Stir well until all the pasta is evenly coated with the delicious pizza sauce and meat.
8. Layer in : Slow Cooker: Add half of the coated pasta mixture to the prepared slow cooker, spreading it into an even layer. Top this layer with half (approximately 8 ounces) of the shredded mozzarella cheese. Add the remaining pasta mixture on top of the cheese, spreading it evenly.
9. Final : Cheese & Cook: Add the remaining half (approximately 8 ounces) of the shredded mozzarella cheese on top of the pasta. Place the lid on the slow cooker. Cook on low for 3-4 hours until the casserole is warmed through, bubbly around the edges, and the cheese is fully melted and gooey.
10. Serve: Serve immediately, garnishing with chopped fresh parsley if desired for a burst of color and freshness.

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Adjust seasoning if you change the meat.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Al Dente Pasta: Cooking the pasta al dente is crucial.

It will continue to cook and absorb liquid in the slow cooker, so starting it slightly firm prevents it from becoming mushy.

Drain Meat Well: Draining excess fat from the ground meats is important for a casserole that isn't greasy.

Don't Overcook: The goal in the slow cooker is to warm everything through and melt the cheese, not to cook the ingredients further.

More recipes: [ChefManiac.com](https://chefmaniac.com)

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/crock-pot-pizza-casserole-easy-cheesy-family-dinner/>