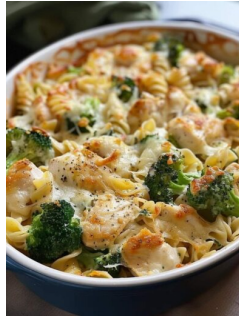


Cheesy Chicken and Broccoli Pasta Bake: Easy Comfort Meal

Chicken and Broccoli Pasta Bake



OVEN
375°F

TIME
2 min

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Recipe Card

SAVE
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INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound chicken tenders, cut into bite-size pieces
- 3 cups fresh broccoli florets
- 1 1/2 cups dry small shaped pasta (such as rotini, penne, or cavatappi)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- Kosher salt and fresh black pepper, to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- 3/4-1 cup chicken broth (low sodium preferred)
- 2 tablespoons shredded Parmesan cheese
- 4 ounces cream cheese, cut into cubes, softened
- 1 1/2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese, divided

Swaps and Notes:

Chicken: Boneless, skinless chicken breasts or thighs, cut into bite-sized pieces, can be used instead of tenders. You can also use cooked, shredded rotisserie chicken for an even faster prep time.

Broccoli: Fresh broccoli florets are best, but frozen broccoli can be used. If using frozen, add directly to the boiling pasta water as directed.

Pasta: Any small to medium-shaped pasta that holds sauce well, like rotini, penne, or cavatappi, is ideal.

Spices: Paprika, garlic powder, and onion powder create a savory base. Feel free to add a pinch of

dried Italian herbs or red pepper flakes for an extra kick.

Chicken Broth: Adjust the amount of chicken broth depending on how thick you like your sauce.

Cream Cheese: Full-fat block cream cheese, softened and cut into cubes, will melt smoothly into the sauce.

Mozzarella Cheese: Freshly shredded mozzarella melts more smoothly than pre-shredded (which often contains anti-caking agents). You can use part-skim or whole-milk mozzarella.

Parmesan Cheese: Freshly grated Parmesan adds a sharper, saltier kick to the final topping.

DIRECTIONS

1. This cheesy pasta bake comes together easily on the stovetop and finishes perfectly in the oven.
2. Cook : Pasta and Broccoli: Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil. Add the 1 1/2 cups dry small shaped pasta and cook according to package directions until al dente. During the last 2 minutes of cooking the pasta, stir in the 3 cups fresh broccoli florets. This ensures the broccoli is crisp-tender. Drain the pasta and broccoli thoroughly when done and set aside.
3. Season : Chicken: In a bowl, toss the 1 pound chicken tenders with 1 teaspoon paprika, 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder, 1/2 teaspoon onion powder, and kosher salt and fresh black pepper to taste. Ensure the chicken pieces are evenly coated.
4. Sear : Chicken: In a large sauté pan or skillet, heat the 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium-high heat. Once the oil is hot, add the seasoned chicken pieces to the pan and sear for a couple of minutes until they are browned on the outside. They don't need to be cooked through completely at this stage.
5. Build the : Creamy Sauce: Pour in 3/4-1 cup chicken broth into the pan with the chicken and allow it to come to a gentle simmer, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Once simmering, add the cubed 4 ounces cream cheese and stir well until it is completely melted and incorporated into the broth. Then, add 3/4 cup of the shredded mozzarella cheese. Stir well until the mozzarella is melted and the sauce has slightly thickened and become smooth.
6. Combine with : Pasta and Broccoli: Turn the heat off under the pan. Gently toss the cooked pasta and broccoli into the creamy chicken sauce in the pan until

everything is well coated.

7. Bake the : Casserole: Transfer the entire chicken and broccoli pasta mixture from the sauté pan to a 9x13-inch baking dish. Cover the dish tightly with aluminum foil. Place in a 375°F (190°C) preheated oven and bake for about 20 minutes.
8. Final : Cheese Melt: Remove the baking dish from the oven. Uncover it, and evenly top the casserole with the remaining 3/4 cup shredded mozzarella cheese and the 2 tablespoons shredded Parmesan cheese. Return the uncovered dish to the oven and continue to bake for another 3 minutes, or until the cheese has melted and is bubbly and lightly golden. For a slightly more browned or crispy cheese topping, you can briefly place it under the broiler (watch very carefully!).
9. Rest & : Serve: Before serving, allow the chicken and broccoli pasta bake to rest for about 5 minutes. This helps the sauce set slightly and prevents it from being too runny. Serve warm and enjoy!

SWAPS & NOTES

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