

Creamy Baked Spaghetti Casserole (Cheesy Layers + Meaty Marinara)

Creamy Baked Spaghetti Casserole (Cheesy, Cozy, and Crowd-Pleasing)



OVEN
350°F

TIME
10 min

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INGREDIENTS

For the pasta + sauce:

1 lb spaghetti
1 lb ground beef
1 jar (24 oz) marinara sauce
Salt, to taste

Black pepper, to taste

For the creamy filling:

8 oz cream cheese, softened
1 cup cottage cheese
1 cup sour cream
¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese

For topping:

2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
... cup butter, sliced (for those classic buttery pockets on top)

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat + prep: Heat oven to 350°F (175°C) and grease a 9x13-inch baking dish.
2. Cook spaghetti: Boil spaghetti until al dente (slightly firm). Drain and set aside.
3. Brown the beef: In a skillet over medium heat, cook ground beef until browned. Drain excess fat.
4. Simmer the sauce: Stir marinara into the beef and simmer 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.
5. Make creamy filling: In a bowl, mix cream cheese, cottage cheese, sour cream, and Parmesan until smooth.
6. Layer #1: Add half the spaghetti to the baking dish.
7. Creamy middle: Spread the cheese mixture evenly over the spaghetti.
8. Layer #2: Add remaining spaghetti on top.
9. Sauce it: Pour the meat sauce evenly across the top.
10. Finish + bake: Dot with sliced butter, sprinkle mozzarella, cover with foil, and bake 30 minutes. Uncover and bake 10-15 minutes until bubbly and golden.
11. Rest: Let it sit 10 minutes before slicing (this helps it hold its shape).

SWAPS & NOTES

Ground beef alternatives: Ground Italian sausage, turkey, or a beef/pork blend all work beautifully.

Cottage cheese substitute: Ricotta is a perfect 1:1 swap if that's what you have.

Add veggies: Stir in sautéed mushrooms, spinach, or diced bell peppers to the meat sauce.

Spice it up: Add red pepper flakes, a pinch of cayenne, or a spoonful of Calabrian chili paste if you like heat.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Al dente is essential so it doesn't get mushy after baking.

Soften the cream cheese fully for a smooth, spreadable filling (no lumps).

It's tempting to dig in immediately, but a short rest makes cleaner slices.

Use freshly shredded mozzarella if you can-melts better than pre-shredded.

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

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/creamy-baked-spaghetti-casserole-cheesy-layers-meaty-marinara/>