

Baked Spanish Rice and Beef Casserole with Rotel and Cheddar

When the weather cools down or the week gets particularly hectic, my kitchen at



OVEN
350°F

TIME
5 min

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INGREDIENTS

Spanish Rice: 1 box (such as Rice-A-Roni) prepared according to package directions.

Ground Beef: 1 pound lean ground beef.

Onion: 1 medium yellow onion, chopped.

Bell Peppers: 1 red and 1 green bell pepper, chopped (for color and sweetness).

Cheddar Cheese: 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar, plus extra for the topping.

Rotel Tomatoes: 1 can (10 oz) Diced Tomatoes and Green Chilies.

Spices: 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin, plus salt and black pepper to taste.

Swaps and Notes:

The Protein: If you want a leaner version, ground turkey or even ground bison works beautifully here. If you're looking for a meatless version, a blend of black beans and pinto beans is a fantastic substitute.

The Rice: While a boxed mix is a great time-saver, you can use 2 cups of leftover cooked rice mixed with a tablespoon of tomato paste and a teaspoon of chili powder if you don't have a box on hand.

Cheese Variations: For a bit more heat, swap the cheddar for pepper jack. For an ultra-smooth melt, a Mexican cheese blend or Monterey Jack is excellent.

Shortcut King: If you're really short on time, this Dorito Casserole is another one of my favorite

"cheat-code" dinners for busy nights.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Prepare the Rice Base:
2. SautØ the Beef and Veggies:
3. Season and Combine:
4. The Bake:
5. Bubbling and Golden:
6. Rest and Serve:

Tips for Success:

Don't Overcook the Rice: Since the rice will bake in the oven for another 30 minutes, try to cook it to "al dente" on the stove. This prevents the rice from becoming mushy in the casserole.

Fresh Peppers are Key: While you can use frozen peppers in a pinch, fresh bell peppers provide a necessary crunch and brightness that cuts through the richness of the beef and cheese.

High Heat Browning: Make sure your skillet is hot before adding the beef. A good sear on the meat adds a "premium" savory depth that you can't get from simmering alone.

Serving Suggestions and Pairings:

Nutritional Information (Per Serving):

Calories: 480 kcal

Total Fat: 23g

Saturated Fat: 11g

Carbohydrates: 38g

Protein: 29g

Fiber: 4g

Storage and Leftover Tips:

Fridge: Store leftovers in an airtight container for up to 4 days. This is one of those dishes that actually tastes better the next day as the spices continue to meld with the rice.

Freezing: You can freeze the unbaked casserole! Cover tightly with plastic wrap and foil. It will keep for up to 2 months. Bake from frozen at 350°F for about 45-55 minutes.

Reheating: To keep the rice from drying out, add a teaspoon of water to your portion before microwaving.

DIRECTIONS

1. **Prepare the Rice Base:** Prepare your Spanish rice according to the instructions on the box. Once cooked, fluff it with a fork and set it aside. While the rice is simmering, preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C) and lightly grease a 9x13-inch baking dish.
2. **SautØ the Beef and Veggies:** In a large skillet over medium-high heat, add the ground beef and chopped onion. Cook until the beef is mostly browned, then add the chopped red and green bell peppers. SautØ for another 5 minutes until the vegetables are tender and the beef is fully cooked.
3. **Season and Combine:** Drain any excess grease from the skillet. Stir in the can of Rotel (don't drain it-the juice is where the flavor lives!), the ground cumin, salt, and pepper. Add the prepared Spanish rice and 1 cup of the shredded cheddar cheese to the skillet. Mix thoroughly until the cheese starts to get stringy.
4. **The Bake:** Transfer the entire mixture into your prepared baking dish. Spread it out evenly with a spatula. Sprinkle a generous extra layer of cheddar cheese over the top.
5. **Bubbling and Golden:** Bake for 25 to 30 minutes. You want the cheese on top to be completely melted, bubbly, and just starting to turn golden brown around the edges.
6. **Rest and Serve:** Let the casserole rest for about 5 minutes before serving. This allows the flavors to settle and makes it easier to scoop out clean portions.
7. **Tips for Success:** **Don't Overcook the Rice:** Since the rice will bake in the oven for another 30 minutes, try to cook it to "al dente" on the stove. This prevents

the rice from becoming mushy in the casserole.

8. **Fresh : Peppers are Key:** While you can use frozen peppers in a pinch, fresh bell peppers provide a necessary crunch and brightness that cuts through the richness of the beef and cheese.
9. **High : Heat Browning:** Make sure your skillet is hot before adding the beef. A good sear on the meat adds a "premium" savory depth that you can't get from simmering alone.
10. **Serving Suggestions and Pairings:** This casserole is a powerhouse on its own, but I love serving it with a dollop of cool sour cream and a scoop of fresh guacamole on the side.
11. **For a larger spread,** it pairs perfectly with a Walking Taco Bar or a side of Chicken Enchiladas. If you're looking for a beverage to cut through the spice, a cold lime-infused sparkling water or a light lager is the way to go.
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21. **More Recipes You Will Love:** If you enjoyed this hearty, one-dish bake, check out these other favorites from chefmaniac.com:
22. **Mexican :** Chicken and Rice Casserole - A creamy, dreamy sister dish to this beef version.
23. **The :** Ultimate Dorito Casserole - For when you want something fun and crunchy.
24. **Cozy :** Chicken Enchiladas - The perfect crowd-pleasing dinner.
25. **Walking :** Taco Bar - Great for hosting without the stress.

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

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/baked-spanish-rice-and-beef-casserole-with-rotel-and-cheddar-2/>