Eat Smart New York!

MAKE YOUR FOOD DOLLARS COUNT

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Invent A Casserole

A casserole is a great way to use leftovers and stretch your food dollar. It can be whatever you want it to be: fancy for company, substantial for your hungry family, or thrifty when dollars and food run low. Here are a few ideas:

Create a Casserole

Remember to be creative when making a casserole. Build a casserole in layers. Bake 350°-375° for 35 to 45 minutes. Use a 9x13" cake pan or 2-3 quart casserole dish.

Layer One:
Cooked starchy food (1-1/2 to 2 cups)
beans pasta rice
potatoes corn stuffing

Layer Two:
Cooked protein foods (1-1/2 to 2 cups)
beef tuna salmon
cheese pork eggs
chicken

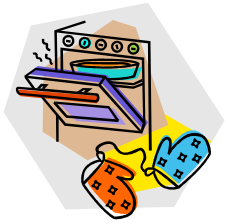
Layer Three:
Fresh cooked/canned/thawed frozen vegetables (1-1/2 cups)
carrots onions
peas tomatoes
peppers eggplant
broccoli cabbage
green beans

Layer Four:
Sauce (1-3/4 to 2 cups)
white sauce gravy
canned cream soup
tomato or spaghetti sauce

If you are using canned cream soup, remember they have a high sodium content. A good way to add calcium is to use 1/3 can of milk.

Layer Five (optional):
Topping (2 to 4 Tablespoons)
crackers chow mien noodles
crushed cornflakes grated cheese
refrigerated biscuits
fresh or seasoned bread crumbs

To cook on top of stove:
Heat and stir everything except topping. Add more liquid (ex: milk) if it gets dry. Pour into dish and add topping if desired.



One-Step Macaroni and Cheese

2 cups uncooked elbow macaroni
3-1/2 cups milk (low fat)
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
2-1/2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
Paprika

In lightly oiled 12x8x2" baking dish, stir uncooked macaroni, milk, Worcestershire sauce, and 1-1/2 cups cheese until well blended. Cover tightly with foil. Bake in 350° oven 50 minutes. Uncover, top with remaining 1 cup cheese and sprinkle with paprika. Bake 10 minutes more, or until cheese is melted. Let stand 10 minutes before serving. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

Quick Lasagna Toss

12 lasagna noodles, broken into large pieces
1 pound hot Italian sausage, casing removed
1 jar (26 ounces) spaghetti sauce
1 cup ricotta cheese
2 cups (8 ounces) shredded mozzarella cheese
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/2 teaspoon dried basil
1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Cook the noodles according to the package directions; drain.

Meanwhile, in a soup pot, cook the sausage over medium-high heat for 6 to 8 minutes, or until no pink remains, stirring to crumble the sausage; drain fat.

Add the noodles and the remaining ingredients; mix well. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook for 6 to 8 minutes, or until heated through and the cheese is melted. Serve immediately.

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Food Safety

- Any part of a dish that is left over should be refrigerated as soon as possible.
- If cooked and to be frozen, divide into small containers before freezing.
- Wrap tightly, allowing 1-inch head space when freezing.
- Do not store longer than 2 to 6 months.
- Thaw overnight in refrigerator before reheating; then bake for only 30 minutes to reheat.
- If not thawed, bake covered for 1 to 1-1/2 hours. Time is approximate depending on type and size of casserole

Stretching Your Food Dollars

When a meal is over, save your leftovers (even a couple of Tablespoons). Have three containers in your freezer. One for each: meat (chopped or diced), veggies and liquid, and a third for gravies. When you want a quick meal, thaw in the refrigerator or microwave the containers and combine in a lightly oiled casserole dish. Top with some homemade unbaked biscuits or package of refrigerated biscuits. Bake at 350° until biscuits are done and dish is warm and bubbly. Uncooked pie dough can be used for bottom and/or top crust too.

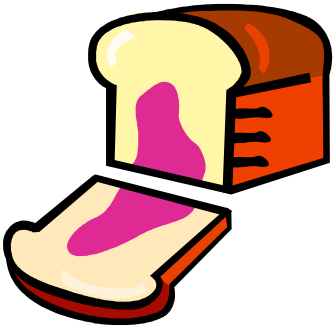
Kid's Corner

Bread in a Bag

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 package rapid rise yeast
3 Tablespoons sugar
3 Tablespoons nonfat dry milk
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup hot water (125-130°)
3 Tablespoons vegetable oil
1 cup whole wheat flour

Combine 1 cup all-purpose flour, undissolved yeast, sugar, dry milk and salt in a 1 gallons size freezer bag with zipper-lock. Force air out. Work bag with fingers to blend ingredients. Add hot water and oil to the dry ingredients. Reseal bag. Mix by working bag with fingers. Add whole wheat flour and mix again. Gradually add enough remaining flour to make a stiff dough that pulls away from sides of bag. On floured surface, knead dough 2-4 minutes.

Cover dough and rest 10 minutes. Roll dough out into a rectangle. Roll up and pinch edges to seal. Place in a lightly oiled 8 x 4 x 2 inch glass loaf pan; cover. Fill a large shallow pan halfway with boiling water. Place baking sheet over the shallow pan of water. Place loaf pan on baking sheet and let dough rise for 20 minutes or until doubled. Bake at 375° for about 25 minutes.



Helpful Casserole Hints

- Don't overcook food.
- A covered casserole will retain moisture in cooking liquids and sauce will be thinner. For example: If sauce is too thin, cook with cover removed for a period of time.
- If more liquid needs to be added, heat liquid before adding (even water).
- Seasoning can be added for improved flavor. Avoid using garlic or onion salt because of sodium. Sautéed onions, peppers and garlic can be added also. Any dried herb will enhance a dish.
- A casserole for your family gives good balanced nutrition and also is appetizing. Keep in mind flavors must be compatible, with good texture and color.

Free Nutrition Education Programs

Eat Smart New York!

Nutrition Teaching Assistants are available to help limited income individuals and families throughout Herkimer County stretch their food dollars to feed themselves and their families better.

Lessons can take place in participants homes or worksites as well as at community centers. Newsletters and other resources are also available by mail.

Topics include:

- Budgeting and stretching food dollars.
- Basic nutrition and menu planning.
- Preparing low cost, easy recipes and menus.
- Preserving, storing and preparing food safely.

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