

Healthy Chicken Pasta Bake

Even better than making a chicken and pasta dish with a smooth creamy sauce, is making it without a single drop of cream!!



While not quite a one-pot production, you won't regret using that extra saucepan to put this dish together.

To create that creamy, silky sauce, I mix through and pour over the top of my Chicken Pasta dish pureed white cauliflower deliciousness.

Combined with butter and a handful of parmesan cheese, the pureed cauliflower brings together the chicken and pasta for a super satisfying, healthy, complete meal.



To cut down on the preparation time, I usually have the pasta and cauliflower cooking away in separate saucepans simultaneously, while the onions and chicken are sautéing in a frypan.

That may sound like a lot of washing up, but you are only using the saucepans for boiling. No scrubbing of pots required, just a quick rinse and wipe!

You can use just one saucepan for everything (except baking), but it will increase the preparation time. Don't forget that this is an all-in-one meal. You have your protein, carbohydrates and vegetable.

Once you have tasted this dish, I know you won't mind having had an extra pot or two to wash up. It's definitely worth it!!

Danielle

Preparation Time: 40 minutes
minutes

Cooking Time: 20

Serves: 4 – 5

Ingredients

- 3 skinless chicken thigh fillets (Note 1)
 - 200 g (7 oz) penne pasta
 - 500 g (17 oz) cauliflower (Note 2)
 - 1 medium onion, roughly chopped
 - 2 tbsp olive oil
 - 40 g butter
 - 1 – 1 1/4 cups warm milk
 - 2 big handfuls of grated parmesan cheese
 - 1 tbsp parsley, chopped (optional)
 - salt and pepper (Note 3)
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Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 180 C (350 F). Steps 1 – 5 can be done simultaneously.
2. Bring a medium saucepan with salted water to a full rolling boil. Add the pasta and cook until just tender (roughly 8 – 10 minutes). Strain and tip into a baking dish. (Note 4)
3. Place the cauliflower in a small – medium pot. Fill it half way with cold water. Place the **lid on** and cook over medium – high heat until the cauliflower is soft (roughly 8 – 10 minutes). Strain and set aside.
4. Heat the olive oil in a medium frypan over low – moderate heat. Add the onions and sauté until soft and transparent.
5. Push the chopped onion to the edge of the saucepan and add the sliced chicken thighs. Sauté over moderate – high heat until you can no longer see any raw bits. Tip

into baking dish containing the cooked pasta. Gently mix.

6. Place the cooked cauliflower into a blender. Add the butter, milk, cheese. Blend until smooth and silky. Add 1/2 salt and pepper. Blitz again and check the seasoning.
 7. Pour 1 cup of pureed cauliflower over the chicken and pasta mixture. Add the chopped parsley. Mix together.
 8. Pour the remainder of the sauce over the mixture. Sprinkle with another big handful of parmesan cheese.
 9. Place on the **top rack** of your oven and bake for 20 minutes or until a golden crust forms on the surface.
 10. Serve while still fairly hot.
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Notes

1. Slice the fillets as shown in the photograph; roughly 1 cm (1/2 inch) thick. Then chop them into smaller pieces. I like mine to be a bit on the chunky side; that's just my preference.
2. When you remove the stem of the cauliflower, it will naturally fall apart into large florets (flowering stems). Break these down into smaller florets with your hands or a knife. Essentially, you want them small enough to fit comfortably in a small pot as well as a blender.
3. Make sure you season well to bring out the full flavour of the ingredients. You may decide that you need a little more salt and/or pepper.
4. Salt the water you boil the pasta and cauliflower in; this will give them a flavour boost. I use 2 – 3 tsp or enough for the water to taste quite salty.

