

Baked Spaghetti

From the Kitchen of [Deep South Dish](#)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 3/4 pound spaghetti noodles, *cooked and drained*
- 6 slices bacon
- 2 cloves garlic, *minced*
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup chopped bell pepper
- 2 (14.5 ounce) cans Italian style diced tomatoes, *with liquid*
- 2 (10 ounce) cans Rotel tomatoes, *with liquid*
- 1/2 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 2 cups grated Cheddar or Mozzarella cheese, *divided*

For the Topping:

- 1 (10-3/4 ounce) can original cream of mushroom soup
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Butter or spray a 9 × 13 x 2 inch baking dish with non stick spray; set aside.
2. Break the spaghetti noodles in half once or twice if desired, to make them more bite sized and drop them into a large stockpot filled with boiling, well salted water.
3. Meanwhile, brown the ground beef in a large skillet; remove, drain and set aside.
4. Cut the bacon in half lengthwise, stack a few slices together and cut into small pieces, dropping it directly into that same skillet. Cook until only slightly crispy; remove and let drain on a paper towel, reserving the bacon fat in the skillet.
5. Add the onion and green bell pepper to the bacon drippings and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook another 2 minutes.
6. To that, add the tomatoes, Italian seasoning, and the cooked beef and bacon. Bring up to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes.
7. Layer half of the spaghetti noodles into the prepared baking dish.
8. Spoon half of the meat sauce over the noodles. Add half of the cheddar and then repeat all three layers.
9. Combine the cream of mushroom soup with the water and blend well. Dollop all over the top layer of cheese and carefully spread across the top.
10. Sprinkle the top with the Parmesan cheese and bake, uncovered, at 350 degrees F for about 30 to 35 minutes, or until heated through and bubbly around the edges.

11. Let casserole rest for 10 minutes before spooning out into servings.

NOTES

The casserole came right up to the very top of my baking dish by the time that I got through the layering, so for insurance, I placed a pan on the lower rack and the casserole on the top rack to bake, just in case there was any spillover. There wasn't, thankfully, but you may want to take that precaution also, just in case!

Use a mix of sweet or hot Italian sausage with the ground beef. I use the original cream soup in most of my casseroles. I find that the lower fat and sodium products tend to be watery in casseroles. 1-1/2 cups of commercial white cheese sauce (such as Ragu brand alfredo, four cheese, parmesan, etc.) may be substituted for the cream soup and water. I use mild Rotel, but it is also okay to omit it and substitute plain diced tomatoes; may also drain the Rotel to tone it down and just loosen the sauce a bit with some beef broth.

Tip: If you'd ever had the occasion to end up with watery spaghetti on your plate, the culprit is likely the wet pasta. Don't rinse the pasta, make sure you give it time to drain really well, and don't build the casserole until it is dry and stops steaming. That steam can create condensation and thus water in the finished dish. Also, you can transfer the pasta back to the hot, but empty, cooking pot and place it back over the turned off burner. The residual heat from the burner and the pot will help to dry the water out of the pasta.

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