

Easy Southern Chicken Spaghetti Casserole

Easy Southern chicken spaghetti casserole is the kind of meal that brings warmth to the table. Loaded with tender chicken, creamy sauce, melted cheese, and a touch of spice, it blends everything we love about Southern comfort food into one dish. Simple to prepare and hearty enough for the whole family, it's perfect for both weeknight dinners and gatherings. With its rich flavor and golden top, this casserole proves that comfort food doesn't have to be complicated to be irresistible.

The Appeal of a Southern Casserole

Comfort Food Classic

Southern casseroles are all about family-style dining and flavors that feel nostalgic. They combine protein, pasta, and sauce in a single dish that feeds everyone at once. This recipe checks all the boxes with its tender chicken, creamy base, and cheesy topping. It's easy to prepare, budget-friendly, and reheats beautifully, making it a go-to option for meal prep. Like many Southern dishes, it's not just about feeding people but also about creating comfort.

Layers of Flavor

The beauty of this chicken spaghetti casserole lies in its balance. Cream of chicken soup creates a creamy base, while cheddar cheese provides tang and richness. Paprika and cayenne pepper give the dish warmth without being overwhelming, and bell peppers bring a touch of sweetness. Every layer works together to create a satisfying dish. Much like [Baked Melt In Your Mouth Chicken](#), it's a simple recipe elevated by thoughtful layering of flavors.

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- Author: [Aaron recipes](#)
- Total Time: [45 minutes](#)
- Yield: [6 servings 1x](#)

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Description

A Southern comfort classic with shredded chicken, spaghetti, cheddar cheese, bell peppers, and spices baked into a creamy, cheesy casserole.

Ingredients

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Scale

- ☐ 3–4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 1.5 lbs)
 - ☐ 8 oz spaghetti
 - ☐ 2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
 - ☐ 1 cup chopped bell peppers
 - ☐ 1 can (10.5 oz) cream of chicken soup
 - ☐ 1 tsp paprika
 - ☐ 1/2 tsp cayenne pepper
 - ☐ 1 tsp garlic powder
 - ☐ 1/4 cup sliced green onions
 - ☐ Cook Mode Prevent your screen from going dark
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Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C) and grease a large casserole dish.
2. Cook chicken in a skillet 6–7 minutes per side until golden and cooked through. Shred once cooled.
3. Boil spaghetti in salted water until al dente, 8–10 minutes. Drain and set aside.
4. In a bowl, mix shredded chicken, spaghetti, cream of chicken soup, bell peppers, paprika, cayenne, garlic powder, and half the cheddar.
5. Transfer mixture to casserole dish and top with remaining cheese.
6. Bake 25–30 minutes until bubbly and golden brown.
7. Let rest 5 minutes, garnish with green onions, and serve.

Notes

Add mushrooms, spinach, or zucchini for extra vegetables.

Swap chicken for turkey, beef, or shrimp for variety.

Adjust spice with more cayenne or red pepper flakes.

Freeze leftovers in portions for up to two months.

- Prep Time: 15 minutes
- Cook Time: 30 minutes
- Category: Main Dish
- Method: Baking
- Cuisine: Southern

Nutrition

- **Serving Size:** 1 cup (200g)
- **Calories:** 380
- **Sugar:** 2g
- **Sodium:** 850mg
- **Fat:** 18g
- **Saturated Fat:** 9g
- **Unsaturated Fat:** 7g
- **Trans Fat:** 0g
- **Carbohydrates:** 36g
- **Fiber:** 2g
- **Protein:** 24g
- **Cholesterol:** 70mg

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Preparing the Chicken

Seasoning the Meat

Chicken is seasoned lightly before cooking to ensure every bite carries flavor. Garlic powder, salt, and pepper are all it needs. This simple seasoning blends well with the creamy sauce later and prevents the meat from tasting bland. Using boneless, skinless breasts keeps the dish lean, though thighs can add extra juiciness. Seasoning at the start means the chicken enhances the casserole instead of simply disappearing into the sauce.

Cooking and Shredding

Cooking chicken until golden ensures it remains juicy while offering a base of flavor for the casserole. Once cooked, it's shredded into bite-sized pieces. Shredding is ideal because it lets the chicken mix evenly with the spaghetti and creamy sauce. Unlike cubed chicken, shredded meat captures the sauce more effectively, making every bite tender and flavorful. This step also helps stretch the protein, giving balance to the pasta and cheese in the dish.

Cooking the Spaghetti

Timing for Perfect Texture

The spaghetti forms the foundation of this casserole. Cooking it until al dente in salted water ensures it holds its structure when baked. Overcooked pasta becomes mushy after baking, so timing is essential. The salt in the water is equally important, as it seasons the noodles from within. Properly cooked spaghetti blends seamlessly with the sauce and chicken without becoming too soft.

Mixing with Sauce and Chicken

Once drained, the spaghetti is combined with shredded chicken, soup, peppers, cheese, and spices. This mixture coats each strand with creaminess before it ever enters the oven. Mixing everything beforehand guarantees consistency, so the flavors are evenly distributed throughout the casserole. When baked, the pasta absorbs even more sauce, creating a rich, hearty texture that feels indulgent but also balanced.

Creating the Sauce

Creamy Base

Cream of chicken soup forms the creamy backbone of the casserole. It's smooth and rich, eliminating the need for heavy cream or complex sauces. When mixed with cheddar cheese, it becomes tangy and flavorful. Chicken broth can be added if the mixture feels too thick, helping to keep it silky and spreadable. This sauce not only coats the pasta but also melds everything into one cohesive dish.

Spicy Kick

Paprika and cayenne pepper set this casserole apart. The paprika offers smokiness, while the cayenne brings gentle heat. These spices balance the creaminess of the soup and cheese, preventing the dish from feeling too heavy. For milder palates, cayenne can be reduced. For those who enjoy spice, red pepper flakes or hot sauce can be added. This flexibility ensures the casserole can be tailored to everyone's taste while keeping its Southern flair.

Baking the Casserole

Assembling the Dish

The chicken, spaghetti, sauce, and vegetables are transferred into a greased baking dish. Half the cheese is mixed inside, while the rest is sprinkled on top. This ensures that every bite has gooey melted cheese within as well as a golden topping. Spreading the mixture evenly guarantees even baking.

Golden and Bubbly Finish

Baking at 350°F for about 30 minutes transforms the casserole. The cheese melts into a bubbling, golden crust, while the sauce thickens underneath. Letting it rest for five minutes after baking allows it to set, making it easier to serve. The result is a dish that looks as good as it tastes, with creamy layers inside and a crispy top that invites everyone to dig in.

Serving Suggestions

Pairing with Sides

Because the casserole is rich, pairing it with lighter sides creates balance. A crisp salad with vinaigrette contrasts the creaminess, while roasted vegetables like broccoli or green beans add freshness. Garlic bread or rolls round out the meal, offering crunch and a way to scoop up extra sauce. These sides make the casserole a complete, satisfying dinner.

Serving for Gatherings

This casserole serves a crowd, making it perfect for potlucks, family reunions, or weeknight dinners with guests. Its flavors are approachable enough for kids but complex enough for adults to enjoy. Preparing it in advance and baking it just before serving also makes it convenient. Whether for casual or special occasions, it's always a crowd-pleaser.

Variations and Add-Ins

Adding Vegetables

Bell peppers already bring freshness, but other vegetables can easily be included. Mushrooms add earthiness, spinach offers nutrients, and zucchini blends in subtly. Adding vegetables boosts nutrition while keeping the dish hearty and comforting. By sautéing them lightly before baking, they release less water and maintain texture.

Swapping Proteins

While chicken is traditional, this casserole can be made with turkey, ground beef, or even seafood like shrimp. Turkey provides a lighter option, while beef makes it more robust. Shrimp adds a Southern-inspired coastal twist. For vegetarians, chickpeas or beans can replace the chicken. These swaps keep the dish versatile and adaptable.

Tips for Success

Prepping in Advance

This casserole can be assembled ahead of time and refrigerated. When ready, bake as directed, adding a few extra minutes if chilled. Softening the cream cheese and pre-chopping vegetables also speeds up preparation. Seasoning and cooking the chicken in advance makes the recipe even quicker on busy nights.

Storing Leftovers

Leftovers can be stored in the fridge for up to three days. Reheat gently in the oven, covered with foil, to keep the casserole moist. For longer storage, freeze portions in airtight containers for up to two months. When reheating from frozen, thaw overnight in the fridge before baking. These tips make the recipe practical for meal prep and future dinners.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I make this casserole ahead of time?

Yes, assemble it a day in advance, refrigerate, and bake when ready. Add a few minutes of cooking time if starting cold.

Can I freeze it?

Absolutely. Freeze portions in containers for up to two months. Reheat in the oven for best results.

How can I make it spicier?

Increase cayenne pepper or add red pepper flakes. A drizzle of hot sauce before serving works well too.

Can I use other pasta?

Yes, penne or rotini are excellent alternatives. They hold sauce well and create a slightly different texture.

What cheese works best?

Sharp cheddar gives the boldest flavor. Mozzarella or Monterey Jack can be added for extra meltiness.

Conclusion

Easy Southern chicken spaghetti casserole is the definition of comfort food. With creamy sauce, melted cheese, tender chicken, and pasta, it delivers a satisfying balance of flavors. Paprika and cayenne give it a subtle kick, while the golden baked topping makes it visually irresistible. Adaptable with vegetables or different proteins, it's a dish you'll return to again and again. Whether for weeknights or gatherings, this recipe proves that Southern casseroles are timeless family favorites.