# Casseroles: An Easy, Make-Ahead Meal

Use the guide below to choose your ingredients. To cook, season with salt and pepper or other spices, to taste. Bake at 350°F for 40-60 minutes or until top is brown and bubbly.

Choose from each category for a unique casserole.

## Protein + Vegetable + Sauce + Whole grain + Topping = Casserole

Category	Ingredient choices
Protein	Beef (lean cuts), cubed or ground
1¼ cups, fully cooked	Chicken or turkey (boneless; skin removed), cubed or ground
	Low-sodium ham, diced
	Beans or lentils
	Canned tuna or salmon
Vegetables	Greens (spinach, kale, collards, chard)
1½-2 cups, chopped	Mixed vegetables (such as carrots, peas, and corn)
	Zucchini
	Mushrooms
	Broccoli
Sauce	Low-fat or nonfat cream soup, such as mushroom, celery, or tomato (10 ounce
Choose one	can) + ¼ cup nonfat milk
	Diced tomatoes (14.5 oz can, drained — approx. 1 cup) + ½ cup reduced fat sour cream (optional)
Whole Grains	Brown rice
1½ cups, cooked	Whole wheat pasta
	Barley
	Quinoa
	Cubed whole wheat bread (1 cup)
Toppings	Grated low-fat cheese
½ cup	Bread crumbs
	Crushed corn flakes
	Crushed tortilla chips

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### Casserole Ideas:

#### Chicken, Rice & Broccoli:

1 cup diced, cooked chicken +  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups chopped, blanched broccoli +  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups cooked brown rice + 1 can cream of mushroom soup +  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup nonfat milk +  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup shredded low-fat cheese on top.

## Smoked Turkey & Spinach:

1 cup diced, smoked turkey +  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups chopped spinach +  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped mushrooms +  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups cooked barley + 1 can cream of celery soup +  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup nonfat milk +  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup shredded low-fat cheese on top.

#### Mexican Black Beans & Rice:

1 cup black beans +  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups chopped spinach +  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup corn +  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups cooked brown rice + 1 cup diced tomatoes +  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup low-fat sour cream +  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground cumin +  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon cayenne pepper +  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup shredded low-fat cheese on top.

# Chef's Tips:

- Vegetables: Cook firmer vegetables like carrots or broccoli and heartier greens like kale or collards for 3-4 minutes in boiling water. Drain well before adding to casserole. frozen vegetables, drain them well. You don't need to cook them before adding.
- Whole Grains: Cook grains according to package instructions ahead of time. Refrigerate and add to casseroles you make that week.
- Toppings: Toppings like bread crumbs, corn flakes, or tortilla chips may brown quickly. Cover the casserole loosely with tin foil while cooking. Remove foil for the last 5-10 minutes.
- This recipe framework should provide approximately 4 servings for 3-5 year olds in CACFP and fulfill one meat, one vegetable, and one grain component for lunch or supper. Different meats and vegetables cook differently so measure each component to be sure before serving.

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