

Sarah's Easy Tuscan Chicken Casserole

Serves: 4 to 6

Ingredients:

3½ cups dry penne pasta (or similar short pasta)
1½ lbs chicken tenders (or boneless, skinless chicken breasts/thighs)
2–3 tablespoons butter or olive oil
2 cups chicken broth
1 cup reserved pasta water (from cooking the pasta)
2 cups heavy cream
2 cups fresh spinach, roughly chopped
¾ cup oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, drained and roughly chopped
¾ cup crumbled Gorgonzola or blue cheese
2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon onion powder
1 teaspoon kosher salt (plus extra for pasta water)
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1½ cups grated Parmesan cheese, divided
1 cup freshly shredded mozzarella cheese



Instructions:

Preheat oven to 375°F. Lightly grease a 9×13-inch baking dish with cooking spray or oil.

Cook the pasta: Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add 1 Tbsp kosher salt and the penne. Cook until 2 minutes shy of al dente (about 8–9 minutes). Reserve 1 cup of the pasta water, then drain the pasta and set aside.

Brown the chicken: While the pasta cooks, melt 2–3 Tbsp butter (or heat olive oil) in a large skillet over medium heat. Season the chicken lightly with salt and pepper. Cook undisturbed for 3 minutes, flip, and cook 2–3 more minutes until lightly golden (it will finish cooking in the oven). Transfer to a plate, rest 5 minutes, then slice into ½-inch pieces.

Assemble the casserole: In the prepared baking dish, combine:

- cooked pasta
- sliced chicken
- chicken broth
- heavy cream
- reserved pasta water
- spinach
- sun-dried tomatoes
- Gorgonzola
- ¾ cup of the Parmesan cheese
- Italian seasoning, garlic powder, onion powder, 1 tsp kosher salt and ½ tsp black pepper

Stir everything together until evenly mixed and the pasta is well coated with liquid.

Bake: Place in the center of the oven and bake for 15 minutes. Remove, give it a good stir (this prevents the pasta from sticking and ensures even cooking), then return to the oven for another 20 minutes.

Add cheese topping: Remove from the oven, sprinkle the mozzarella and the remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ cup Parmesan evenly over the top. Bake 10–15 more minutes until the cheese is melted, golden, and bubbly.

Rest and serve: Let the casserole rest for 5–10 minutes before serving so the sauce thickens slightly.

Make-Ahead & Storage:

- Can be assembled up to 24 hours in advance; cover and refrigerate until ready to bake (add 5–10 extra minutes to baking time if cold).
- Leftovers keep in the fridge for up to 4 days or freezer for up to 3 months.

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