

3 Healthy Casseroles

Who doesn't need a (healthy) casserole in the repertoire? You can make them with or without the cheese in the recipes - you decide. (They work out fine without.)

Wild Rice, Kale and Sweet Potato Casserole

Roasted Vegetable, Black Bean and Brown Rice Casserole

Baked Chicken Enchilada Casserole

Pantry item checklist (for all recipes):

- Wild rice
- Rice (white or brown)
- Sweet Potatoes
- Kale
- Canned tomatoes
- Onions
- Garlic
- Fresh parsley (optional)
- 2 big red or orange peppers
- Pecans (optional - can substitute pepitas)
- Frozen sweet corn
- Cheese - goat cheddar, cheddar, Monterey Jack
- Bouillon cubes (veg or chicken)
- Corn or Non-Corn Tortillas - about 14
- Cilantro
- Scallions (can omit if you need it)
- Spices: oregano, chipotle powder or smoked paprika
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries (optional)

Wild Rice, Kale and Sweet Potato Casserole

Prep time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 1 hour

Yield: 6 servings

Gluten-free, Dairy-free optional

1 1/2 cups wild rice (about 9 ounces)

6 cups vegetable stock or 2 bouillon cubes dissolved in 6 cups hot water

1 1/2 tablespoons coconut oil or olive oil

3 unpeeled sweet potatoes, cut into 1/2" cubes (about 3 cups)

1/2 teaspoon sea salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 large sweet onion, thinly sliced (about 2 cups)

4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped

2 tablespoons coconut oil or olive oil

8 ounces frozen sweet corn kernels, thawed (optional)

2 tablespoons coconut oil or olive oil

2 bunches kale, leaves removed from the stem and finely chopped
1/2 cup chopped Italian parsley
1 cup organic pecans (optional)
1/2 cup dried cranberries (optional)
1 cup shredded goat cheddar (or your favorite melted cheese) - (optional)

Preheat oven to 400°F. Place pecans, if using, on a small cookie sheet and roast for 8 minutes while the oven is heating. Remove from the oven. When cool, snap in half lengthwise and set aside.

Rinse rice in strainer under cold water; drain. Bring 6 cups stock and wild rice to boil in medium saucepan. Reduce heat; simmer at a steady boil uncovered until rice grains begin to split and are tender but still slightly chewy, about 45 minutes for cultivated wild rice, or 25 minutes for hand-harvested wild rice.. Drain if there is extra liquid leftover. (Can be made 1 day ahead. Cover and chill.)

While rice is cooking, steam sweet potato cubes over plenty of boiling water in a steamer basket until tender, about 15 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Meanwhile, slice the onion, chop the garlic and stem and chop the kale. Warm a large skillet over medium heat, then add 2 tablespoons oil and onion and cook until the onion is translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and kale and sauté 5 minutes longer. Add the cooked wild rice, the roasted sweet potatoes and thawed corn; stir until heated through, about 5 minutes. Stir in parsley; season with salt and pepper. You can serve this now as a cozy bowl meal, and top it with coconut aminos or a favorite hot sauce.

Or, you can turn this into a baked casserole by transferring all but pecans, cranberries and cheese (if using) to a buttered baking dish or casserole, top with cheese and bake in a 350° oven for 30 minutes until heated through. Garnish with pecans and serve.

(Can be made 1 day ahead. Cover and chill. Serve with beans, lentils or sautéed venison for extra protein.)

Roasted Vegetable, Black Bean and Brown Rice Casserole

Prep time: 1 hour 10 min prep, including cooking the brown rice

Cooking time: 30 minutes

Yield: 8-10 servings

Gluten-free, Dairy-free optional

3 cups cooked brown rice (any variety brown rice - short grain, long grain, brown Basmati, brown Jasmine, or sweet brown rice)
2 red or orange peppers, trimmed and seeded, cubed into generous 1/2" pieces
1 large red onion (about 2 cups chopped)
1 large sweet potato, cubed into 1/2" pieces
8-12 stalks kale, stalks discarded, leaves roughly chopped
1 tablespoon coconut oil or olive oil
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 teaspoons smoked paprika
1 (28 ounce) can organic fire-roasted whole tomatoes, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced

1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
1/2 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 (10 ounce) bag frozen baby sweet corn
3 cups cooked black beans, from scratch or from one (28 ounce) can, drained
8 ounces cheese, shredded - organic sharp cheddar, goat cheddar, pepper jack, smoked provolone,
optional

1. Prepare the rice, if needed. Preheat oven to 450°.

2. Wash and prepare all of the vegetables. Line a heavy, rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Rub 1 tablespoon coconut oil between your palms until it softens, and then rub over all of the vegetables on the baking sheet until well-dispersed among most vegetable surfaces. Rinse your hands, then season the vegetables with a large pinch sea salt, 2 teaspoons smoked paprika and several grindings of black pepper. Distribute the vegetables for even baking, then roast in the center of the oven until the sweet potatoes are tender and vegetables are roasted, about 25 minutes. Add the kale and return to the oven for 5 minutes longer to wilt. Remove the vegetables from the oven and let cool in the pan. Reduce oven temperature to 350°.

3. While the vegetables are roasting, toss the chopped, canned tomatoes with a pinch of sea salt and the minced fresh garlic. Stir in 1/2 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil and a large pinch of oregano and let stand until the casserole is ready to assemble.

3. Assemble the casserole. Oil the bottom and sides of a deep 9"x13" baking pan or lasagne pan with coconut oil. Spread the brown rice in the bottom of the pan, then arrange the vegetables on the next layer, followed by the sweet corn. Spoon the black beans evenly over the vegetables and follow with the tomatoes, spread evenly over the black beans. Sprinkle with the shredded cheese, if using (can use on just half of the casserole or omitted completely - the casserole is just as good without cheese.)

4. Bake until heated through and the casserole is bubbly, about 30 - 35 minutes. (Can refrigerate or freeze up until this point. Increase baking time to 45 minutes if casserole was refrigerated. Thaw frozen casserole in the refrigerator and bake for 45 minutes or until hot in the center and bubbling.)

Baked Chicken Enchilada Casserole

Yield: 4-6 servings

1 large sweet potato, scrubbed and cut crosswise into 1" slices
3 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 yellow onion, roughly chopped
6 cloves garlic, minced
Sea salt
1 28-oz can whole, peeled tomatoes
1/2 cup water
1 to 2 chipotles in adobo (or 1/2 teaspoon ground chipotle, or smoked paprika)
about 14 corn tortillas
1 bunch kale or chard, stems removed, leaves roughly chopped
9 ounces sharp Cheddar, grated
1 bunch cilantro
1 bunch scallions, trimmed, white and green parts thinly sliced (skip if you don't have them)

1. Preheat oven to 425°. Place the sliced sweet potato on an oiled baking sheet and sprinkle with salt. Roast for about 15 minutes or until just tender, then remove from the oven and let cool on baking sheet. (Alternately, just steam the sweet potatoes in a covered pot over boiling water for 10-15 minutes.) Steam the kale until just wilted, and remove to a cutting board or colander to cool.

2. Meanwhile, poach the chicken breasts. Place the chicken in a medium pot and cover with cold water. Bring to a simmer, then cover the pan and remove it from the heat and let sit, covered, for about 10-15 minutes while you're making the sauce in the next step.

3. Heat a medium pot or deep sauté pan over medium heat until hot to the touch, then add olive oil, onions and garlic. Stir to coat in oil and sauté until golden, about 6 minutes. Add a large pinch of salt along with the tomatoes, 1/2 cup water, and 1 to 2 chipotles in adobo (start with one, then simmer and taste before adding a second to make sure the heat is where you want it). Bring liquid to a simmer and cook until warmed through, about 7 minutes. Remove from the heat, and use a handheld blender or food processor to purée to a thick, smooth, uniform sauce, taking care with hot liquid. Set sauce back over low heat and gently simmer to keep warm.

4. Remove chicken from poaching liquid and set on a plate to cool. Once cool enough to handle, pull chicken into shreds. Cut the sweet potato slices into quarters. Coat bottom of a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with a thin layer of sauce. Arrange a single layer of tortillas over sauce, overlapping edges to fit. Add chicken to the pot with the remaining sauce.

5. Spoon a thin layer of sauce/chicken over tortillas and top with a scattering of sweet potato and greens, followed by a loose layer of grated cheese, cilantro and scallions. Continue layering tortillas, sauce, veggies, cheese, scallions, herbs until dish is nearly full. End with a layer of tortillas, a layer of sauce and a final layer of cheese. You should have three layers of tortillas.

6. Bake enchiladas on top rack of oven until cheese topping bubbles and browns in spots, 15-20 minutes. Serve immediately. *Note: Make a double batch in two pans and freeze the second casserole for a super easy dinner on a busy night. Bake frozen casserole at 350°, uncovered, for 45 minutes until hot and bubbling.