Vegetable and Chicken Penne Casserole

Overview

Filled with a variety of hearty vegetables, chicken, and tri-coloured penne pasta all bathed in a milk sauce, this dish contains representatives from all four food groups in Canada’s Food Guide. The leftovers are great for lunches at work or school.

*Source: Adapted from Loonyspoons: Low fat food made fun!, 1996*

Directions

2. Cook penne in boiling water until almost cooked (~8 minutes). Drain, rinse and return to saucepan. Set aside.
3. Cook onions, garlic, zucchini, and mushrooms over medium-high heat in a large non-stick saucepan (~7 minutes, until vegetables are tender)
4. Mix the flour and milk until smooth and add to the vegetables. Cook 7-8 minutes stirring often until mixture is thick and bubbly. Stir in tomatoes, spinach, basil, oregano, salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes. Cook 3 more minutes and then remove the mixture from heat.
5. Add chicken and vegetable mixture to noodles and stir.
6. Add half the pasta mixture to a large casserole or lasagna dish. Layer with half the parmesan cheese, and the rest of the pasta mixture followed by the rest of the cheese.
7. Cover the dish and bake at 350F for 35 minutes. Remove from oven, uncover and let sit for 5 minutes before serving.

*Makes 12 servings.*

Ingredients

- 10 oz package frozen spinach, thawed
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 cups sliced zucchini
- 2 cups sliced mushrooms
- 1/4 cup + 1 tbsp all purpose flour
- 2 cups 2% milk
- 28 oz can tomatoes, un-drained, cut up
- 1 1/2 tsp EACH dried basil and oregano
- 3/4 tsp EACH salt and black pepper
- 1/4 tsp crushed red pepper flakes (more if you are daring!)
- 6 cups dry tri-colour penne pasta
- 3 cups chopped cooked skinless chicken breast (1 1/4 lb)
- 1 cup grated parmesan cheese

Nutrition Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Per serving (1/12 of recipe)</th>
<th>Calories: 270</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fat: 5.6g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrate: 42g</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fibre: 6.5g</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protein: 18.2g</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Distortion of Portion: What are Portion Sizes?

What is a portion size?

A portion size is what Health Canada uses to standardize “servings” in its recommendations. Different foods have different portion sizes which are equivalent to one serving.

Portions of Meat or Alternatives

- 75g (1/2 cup) fish, shellfish, poultry or meat
- 3/4 cup cooked beans
- 3/4 cup legumes
- 3/4 cup tofu
- 2 eggs
- 2 tbsp peanut butter
- 1/4 cup shelled nuts or seeds

Portions of Fruit or Vegetables

- 1/2 cup 100% fruit or vegetable juice
- 1 cup leafy raw vegetables (salad)
- 1/2 cup vegetables (non-leafy)
- 1 piece of fruit (or 1/2 cup)
- 1/4 cup dried fruit
- 1/2 cup tomato sauce

You can mix and match fruits and vegetables to make a serving. Fill a half cup measure with peas and corn to make a serving. These servings are more compact because of the nutrient density in these foods, so they make a great portable snack!

Did You Know? Fun Fact!

There is now a Food Guide for First Nations, Inuit and Métis with portion sizes for foods like moose stew and bannock.

Portions of Milk or Alternatives

- 1 cup milk or fortified soya beverage
- 3/4 cup yoghurt or kefir
- 50g cheese
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- 1/2 cup pudding or custard (made with milk)
- 200mL yoghurt drinks

Did You Know? Fun Fact!

The Health Canada website allows you to create a customized Food Guide with pictures of portions of your favourite foods! Check it out: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/myguide-monguide/index-eng.php

Portions of Grains

- 1 slice of bread
- 1/2 a bagel, pita or tortilla
- 1/2 cooked rice, pasta or couscous
- 3/4 cup cereal
- 2 cup plain popcorn

How many portions of grains are in your bowl of cereal? How many portions of grains are in your plate of spaghetti? Get out the cup measure. It’s probably more than you thought!
Many packaged foods that we would perceive to be a single serving may not be. Be sure to check the Nutrition Facts Panel. The serving size quoted on the panel is often half or less of what is actually in the package. At a quick glance, we could easily be mislead into thinking that there are less Calories, fat, salt or sugar in the product than there actually is. Make sure to compare the number of grams quoted on the nutrition facts panel with the number of grams in the container. Don’t forget when comparing two products to make sure you are keeping portion size in mind in case one product has a smaller serving size than the other.

Tricks for keeping tabs on portions

**Get out the props**

- 1/2 cup is about the size of a tennis ball or a light bulb
- 50g of cheese is about the size of a 9 volt battery
- 2 tbsp is about the size of a Ping-Pong ball
- A serving of meat is about the size of a deck of cards or a cassette tape (remember those?) or just a bit smaller than an iPhone
- One cup is about the size of a fist or a baseball

REMEMBER that most glasses in our cupboards are actually much larger than 1 cup (250mL)

**Eat off smaller plates**

One trick to keep portion sizes in check is to eat off of smaller plates. Not only will you put less on your plate, you will feel just as full because you will perceive that you have eaten a plateful of food. Keep the serving dishes off of the table to avoid the temptation to re-fill your smaller plate.

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**How many servings do I need in a day?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women 19-50:</th>
<th>Men 19-50:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7-8 Servings Fruits and Vegetables</td>
<td>8+ Servings Fruits and Vegetables</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-7 Servings Grains</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Servings Milk or Alternatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Servings Meat or Alternatives</td>
<td>3 Servings Meat or Alternatives</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Women 51+:</th>
<th>Men 51+:</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>7 Servings Fruits and Vegetables</td>
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</tr>
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<td>6 Servings Grains</td>
<td>7 Servings Grains</td>
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Did you find this newsletter interesting and helpful?

Do you have more questions on how to make healthy changes to your lifestyle?

Come see a Registered Dietitian at the HPC. Learn how much you need to eat, how to optimize your metabolism, prevent cravings, and increase your energy levels!

For information on our programs, check out our website www.uoguelph.ca/hpc and click on the "Fitness and Nutrition" tab, or call a friendly receptionist at the HPC at 519-767-5011.

References and Further Reading

- A Penne Yearned– Loonyspoons: Low fat food made fun!, 1996
- Estimating portion sizes http://caloriecount.about.com/article/when_you_cant_measure_estimate_portions