

# MEXICAN CASSEROLE

You will need a 5 quart square CorningWare casserole dish to make this recipe. Anything smaller and it will bubble over (messy!). The only place these can be purchased (for a reasonable price) are at CorningWare stores in the outlet malls - trust me, I looked everywhere else and couldn't find them.

You can cut the recipe in half and make it in a CorningWare 3-quart rectangular (8" x 11" x 3") dish, though.

## INGREDIENTS:

- 2 pounds ground beef or plant-based meat substitute like Impossible or Beyond, etc.
- 1 medium onion, any variety, chopped fine
- 4 oz can chopped or diced green chiles
- 10 oz can Ro-Tel diced tomatoes and green chiles (normal or hot)
- 14.5 oz can stewed tomatoes (there are a variety of flavors; I use Mexican)
- 10 3/4 oz cans cream of mushroom soup (do not dilute)
- Pkg of 10-12 fajita-size flour tortillas (I like Mission Homestyle Soft & Fluffy)
- 15 oz can Ranch style beans (can use kidney beans or Ranch beans w/jalapenos)
- cups (32 oz) shredded cheddar or colby-jack cheese

**Note:** Only drain juice from can of beans, leave juice/liquid in rest of canned ingredients.

## DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 350 - 375 degrees. I've found that 375 works best.

1. Brown ground beef with chopped onion and drain well, if necessary. If using meat substitute, you may have to add a little water (about ½ - 1 cup) to keep it from drying out and sticking to the skillet.
2. Add chiles, Ro-Tel, tomatoes, beans and any other vegetables. Simmer while preparing baking dish.
3. Spray the casserole dish with Pam (or equivalent).
4. Tear up 6 tortillas into 1" - 2" square pieces and place in the bottom.
5. Spoon half of the meat mixture over the tortillas.
6. Cover with one can of mushroom soup and half of the cheese.
7. Tear up remaining 6 tortillas and place on top of cheese. (Ok if you only have 4 or 5 tortillas per layer)
8. Spoon in remaining meat.
9. Cover with second can of soup and remaining cheddar cheese (cover with cheese).
10. Ingredients may expand while baking, so place a cookie sheet or piece of aluminum foil on the rack directly below your casserole dish to catch any overflow that may occur.

## MEXICAN CASSEROLE (*cont'd*)

11. Bake **UN**covered on middle rack for 45 minutes or till bubbling in center and cheese is melted well. It's obviously a very thick casserole and it takes a lot of time to heat it all the way through. Check after 30 minutes and if it appears that the cheese is browning too much or may burn, tent a piece of aluminum foil over the top and try not to let it contact the cheese.
12. Remove from oven and allow to cool for about 10 -15 minutes before serving, otherwise you may have a soupy mess.

### TIPS & VARIATIONS:

For a spicier dish, use Ranch style beans with jalapenos and substitute the can of green chiles with chopped fresh jalapenos (or serrano or piquin peppers) and mix in with beef when simmering. Add your favorite brand taco/enchilada seasoning to meat while simmering/browning (highly recommended).

If you plan on making this dish vegetarian or vegan, be sure to check the ingredients in the:

- Beans - for beef or other "natural flavors" (which may not be vegan or vegetarian)
- Soup – for beef or other "natural flavors" (which may not be vegan or vegetarian)
- Tortillas – for lard
- Cheese – for enzymes/cultures that are not vegetarian (will say microbial enzymes or no animal rennet used) if it is vegetarian acceptable. Vegan, of course, should be made with something other than dairy.

Leftovers can be used in a variety of ways:

- Chop up, heat in microwave and mix in with scrambled eggs and roll into heated tortilla for breakfast burritos. Can also heat filled burrito in skillet.
- Chop up, heat in microwave and roll into tortilla for burritos. (Then wrap burrito in damp paper towel, microwave and or brown in skillet.)
- Chop up, spoon over tortilla chips, cover with more cheese and microwave for nachos.
- Chop up, spoon over tostadas, top with more cheese, microwave.
- Chop up, heat and spoon over corn chips for Frito-Chili Pie

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