

Treasure Barrel

Baked Chicken Alfredo Pasta Casserole

20 min Prep time	**35 min** Cook time	**55 min** Total time
8 Servings	**Medium** Difficulty	**Italian-American** Cuisine

Ingredients

Pasta and Protein

- [ ] 12 ounces penne pasta
- [ ] 2 pounds boneless skinless chicken breast, cut into 1½ inch pieces
- [ ] 1 tablespoon olive oil

Alfredo Sauce

- [ ] 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- [ ] 4 cloves garlic, minced
- [ ] ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- [ ] 1 cup heavy cream
- [ ] 1 cup whole milk
- [ ] 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Seasoning and Topping

- [ ] 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- [ ] 1 teaspoon salt
- [ ] ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- [ ] 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- [ ] 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley (plus extra for garnish)

Optional

- [ ] 1 cup chopped fresh spinach

Instructions

1. Start by preheating your oven to 375°F (190°C). It's always nice to have it warm and ready before you start the real work.

2. Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil. Cook the 12 ounces penne pasta according to what the package says until it's al dente. Now, here is the trick: drain it, but please, save ½ cup of that starchy pasta water. You might need it later to smooth things out.

3. While the pasta is doing its thing, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Toss in your chicken pieces and season them with salt, pepper, and Italian seasoning. Sear them until they're a lovely golden brown on all sides and cooked through, which usually takes about 6–8 minutes. Once they're done, just move them to a plate and set them aside.

4. In that same skillet—because those brown bits are where the flavor is—melt the 3 tablespoons unsalted butter over medium heat. Stir in the 4 cloves garlic, minced, and let it sáuté for just about 30 seconds until it smells wonderful.

5. Stir in the ¼ cup all-purpose flour and whisk it together to make a roux. Let that cook for about 1 minute. Then, gradually pour in the 1 cup heavy cream and 1 cup whole milk. Keep whisking constantly so you don't get any lumps; we want this silky smooth. Let it simmer for 3–4 minutes until it thickens up nicely.

6. Turn the heat down to low and stir in the 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese until it's completely melted and smooth. Give it a taste—honestly, this is the most important part—and add a bit more salt or pepper if it needs it. If the sauce feels too thick, just add a splash of that reserved pasta water.

7. In a mixing bowl, gently fold together your cooked penne, the golden sautéed chicken, and half of the 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese. Stir it until everything is well coated in that creamy sauce. Now, transfer the whole mixture into your 3-quart baking dish and spread it out evenly.

8. Top the casserole with the remaining mozzarella and sprinkle on those 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley for a bit of brightness.

9. Bake it uncovered for 20–25 minutes. You're looking for that topping to be golden brown and the sauce to be bubbling around the edges.

10. Take it out of the oven and, though it's hard to wait, let it rest for 5 minutes. Serve it hot, and if you like, add 1 cup chopped fresh spinach on top for a bit of color. Garnish with extra parsley if you're feeling fancy.

Nutrition per serving

490 kcal	26 g	42 g	28 g
Calories	Protein	Carbs	Fat

Tips & notes

- Don't forget to save the pasta water; it's a lifesaver if the sauce gets too thick.
- Searing the chicken first ensures it has a deep flavor that doesn't get lost in the cream.
- Letting the casserole rest for a few minutes helps the sauce set so it isn't too runny when served.