

King Ranch Casserole •

Ingredients

Chicken, boneless	2 lbs	White pepper	1/4 tsp.
Water	2 cups	Ground nutmeg	1/8 tsp.
Mexican spice mix	3 Tbsp.	MSG	1/2 tsp.
Caldo de tomate bouillon	1 Tbsp.	Lard	2 Tbsp. + 1 tsp.
Better Than Bouillon - Chicken ..	1 Tbsp.	Onion	1 large
Butter	4 Tbsp.	Bell pepper	1
Flour	1/4 cup	Ro-Tel	10-14 oz. can
Heavy cream	1 1/2 cups	Corn tortillas, medium	14
Chicken broth	1 cup	Sharp cheddar cheese	16 oz.
Fresh mushrooms	8 oz.		
Garlic cloves	4-6		
Onion powder	1 tsp.		

Directions

Preheat oven to 375°F — Quarter corn tortillas; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Grease a 9 inch \times 13 inch baking dish with 1 tsp. lard — Dice onion, bell pepper, and mushrooms; combine in *Large Bowl #1* — Mince garlic; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Shred cheese; set aside in *Large Bowl #2* — Butterfly cut chicken breasts or thighs — Heat 2 cups of water

1. Mix hot water, bouillon, caldo de tomate, and Mexican spice mix.
2. Add the broth and chicken to a pressure cooker (e.g. Instant Pot).
3. Cook on *high* pressure for *6 minutes*, then allow for natural release for *5 minutes*.
4. Remove the chicken and shred it in a large bowl. Reserve 1 cup of the cooking broth.
5. In a large saucepan, melt 4 Tbsp. butter over medium heat. Add mushrooms from *Large Bowl #1* and cook until they release their moisture, about *5 minutes*. Add garlic (*Small Bowl #1*) and cook for *1 minute*.
6. Sprinkle $1/4$ cup flour over the mushroom mixture and cook, stirring constantly, for *2 minutes*.
7. Gradually whisk in $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups heavy cream and 1 cup chicken broth. Add 1 tsp. onion powder, $1/4$ tsp. white pepper, $1/8$ tsp. ground nutmeg, and $1/2$ tsp. MSG. Simmer, stirring frequently, until thickened, about *5 minutes*. Transfer to *Medium Bowl #2*; set aside.
8. In a large skillet, melt 2 Tbsp. lard over medium heat. Sauté onion and bell pepper from *Large Bowl #1* for *5 minutes*.

9. Raise heat to *high* and lightly scorch the **onion** and **bell pepper** for *1-2 minutes*.
10. Reduce heat to *medium*. Add **cream sauce** (*Medium Bowl #2*), Ro-Tel, and reserved **cooking broth**. Stir to combine.
11. Bring to a simmer, reduce heat to *medium-low*, and stir occasionally for *5 minutes*.
12. Add the **shredded chicken** to the sauce and stir to coat evenly. Transfer to *Large Bowl #3*; set aside. Remove from heat.
13. Layer ingredients in the prepared baking dish:
 - $\frac{1}{3}$ of the **tortilla quarters** (*Medium Bowl #1*)
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ of the **chicken mixture** (*Large Bowl #3*)
 - $\frac{1}{3}$ of the **shredded cheese** (*Large Bowl #2*)Repeat layers, then top with remaining **tortillas** (*Medium Bowl #1*) and **cheese** (*Large Bowl #2*).
14. Bake uncovered for *30-35 minutes* until bubbly and cheese is melted.
15. Let stand for *10 minutes* before serving.

Equipment Required

- Pressure cooker or Instant Pot
- 9x13 inch baking dish
- Large skillet (12-inch preferred)
- Large saucepan for cream sauce
- Large mixing bowl for chicken
- Medium bowl for cheese
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Whisk
- Wooden spoon or spatula
- Sharp knife and cutting board
- Box grater for cheese
- Colander (optional, for draining Ro-Tel)

- Authentic lard makes a difference - avoid hydrogenated versions

Preparation Tips

- Cook roux until it smells nutty but watch carefully as gluten-free flour can burn quickly
- Don't skip scorching the vegetables - it adds essential flavor
- Press excess moisture from mushrooms while cooking for better sauce texture
- Keep sauce warm until assembly to maintain proper consistency
- Warm tortillas slightly before cutting to prevent cracking

Mise en Place

- Bring **cream** to room temperature
- Cut and prep all vegetables before starting
- Have all measured ingredients ready before beginning the sauce
- Shred cheese while chicken cooks
- Quarter tortillas before starting assembly

Ingredient Tips

- Use cup4cup or King Arthur Measure for Measure gluten-free flour for best roux results
- Fresh cremini mushrooms provide better flavor than white button
- Extra-sharp cheddar adds more depth of flavor
- If **Mexican spice mix** unavailable, combine equal parts ground cumin, chili powder, and paprika

Make Ahead & Storage

- Chicken can be cooked and shredded up to *2 days* ahead
- Complete sauce up to *24 hours* in advance
- Assembled casserole can be refrigerated up to *24 hours* before baking
- If made ahead, add *10 minutes* to baking time
- Leftovers keep for *3 days*; reheat covered at *350°F*

Serving Suggestions

- Serve with Mexican rice and refried beans
- Garnish with diced avocado and fresh cilantro
- Offer sour cream and hot sauce on the side
- Can be frozen in individual portions for *2 months*