

King Ranch Casserole

Ingredients

Chicken, boneless	2 lbs	White pepper	¼ tsp.
Water	2 cups	Ground nutmeg	1/8 tsp.
Mexican spice mix	3 Tbsp.	MSG	½ 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	¼ cup	Ro-Tel	10-14 oz. can
Heavy cream	1½ 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** — Grease a 9x13 inch baking dish with 1 tsp **lard** — Dice **onion**, **bell pepper**, and **mushrooms** — Mince **garlic** — Shred **cheese** — 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 **butter** over medium heat. Add **mushrooms** and cook until they release their moisture, about *5 minutes*. Add **garlic** and cook for *1 minute*.
6. Sprinkle **flour** over the mushroom mixture and cook, stirring constantly, for *2 minutes*.
7. Gradually whisk in **heavy cream** and 1 cup **chicken broth**. Add **onion powder**, **white pepper**, **ground nutmeg**, and **MSG**. Simmer, stirring frequently, until thickened, about *5 minutes*. Set sauce aside.
8. In a large skillet, melt 2 Tbsp **lard** over medium heat. Sauté **onion** and **bell pepper** 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**, **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. Remove from heat.
13. Layer ingredients in the prepared baking dish:
 - 1/3 of the **tortilla quarters**
 - 1/2 of the **chicken mixture**
 - 1/3 of the **shredded cheese**Repeat layers, then top with remaining **tortillas** and **cheese**.
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)

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

- 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

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*