

# Breakfast Casserole

## Ingredients

Bacon and/or breakfast sausage . . 1 lb.	Black pepper . . . . . 1/2 tsp.
Onion, medium . . . . . 1	White pepper . . . . . 1/4 tsp.
Garlic cloves . . . . . 3–4	Ground mustard . . . . . 1/2 tsp.
Mushrooms, canned sliced . . 8 oz. can	Thyme, dried . . . . . 1 tsp.
Frozen hash browns, shredded . . 20 oz.	Smoked paprika . . . . . 1/2 tsp.
Butter or reserved fat . . . . . 2 Tbsp.	Cheddar cheese, shredded . . . . . 2 cups
Eggs, large . . . . . 12	Smoked Gouda, shredded . . . . . 1 cup
Salt . . . . . 1 tsp.	Cherry tomatoes . . . . . 3/4–1 cup
	Green onion . . . . . 2–3 stalks

## Directions

Preheat oven to  $350^{\circ}\text{F}$  — Thaw **hash browns**; squeeze dry and set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Dice **onion** and mince **garlic**; combine in *Small Bowl #1* (aromatics) — Drain **mushrooms**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Shred **cheddar** and **smoked Gouda**; combine in *Large Bowl #1* — Halve **cherry tomatoes**; set aside in *Small Bowl #3* — Slice **green onion**; set aside in *Small Bowl #4*

1. In a 10–12 inch deep cast-iron skillet over medium heat, cook **bacon** and/or **sausage** until done: **bacon** is crisp and rendered, **sausage** has no pink remaining and is crumbled and browned. Transfer to *Medium Bowl #2* and crumble; set aside. Pour off all but 2 Tbsp. fat from skillet (or add **butter** if using only lean sausage). Reserve skillet.
2. In the same skillet over medium heat, sauté **onion** and **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*) until **onion** is translucent and softened, *about 5–6 minutes*. Add drained **mushrooms** (*Small Bowl #2*) and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender and any liquid has evaporated, *about 4–5 minutes*. Aromatics are done when **onion** is golden at the edges and **mushrooms** are lightly browned. Transfer to *Medium Bowl #3*; set aside. Wipe skillet if needed and add 1–2 Tbsp. **butter** or reserved fat.

3. Spread **hash browns** (*Medium Bowl #1*) in an even layer in the skillet and press down firmly. Cook over medium heat without stirring for *6–8 minutes* until bottom is golden brown and releases easily from the pan. Bottom is done when edges are crisp and the layer holds together when lifted with a spatula. Flip the hash brown layer in one piece (or in two halves if easier) and cook the second side for *5–7 minutes* until golden and crisp. Continue cooking in *1–2 minute* increments if the center is still pale or soft.
4. While the second side of the **hash browns** browns, in *Large Bowl #2* beat **eggs** with 1 tsp. **salt**,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. **black pepper**,  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. **white pepper**,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. **ground mustard**, 1 tsp. **thyme**, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. **smoked paprika** until well combined. Stir in cooked **bacon/sausage** (*Medium Bowl #2*), sautéed **aromatics** (*Medium Bowl #3*), and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups of the **cheddar and Gouda** (*Large Bowl #1*).
5. Pour the **egg mixture** (*Large Bowl #2*) evenly over the **hash browns** in the skillet. Sprinkle the remaining  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups **cheddar and Gouda** (*Large Bowl #1*) over the top and scatter **cherry tomatoes** (*Small Bowl #3*), cut-side up, over the cheese.
6. Bake at  $350^{\circ}F$  for *25–35 minutes* until the center is set: no runny egg when a knife is inserted near the center, top is lightly golden, and the casserole jiggles only slightly when gently shaken. Continue baking in *3–5 minute* increments if the center is still wet.
7. Let rest *5 minutes*, then sprinkle **green onion** (*Small Bowl #4*) over the top. Serve from the skillet.

## Equipment Required

- 10–12 inch deep cast-iron skillet (oven-safe)
- Medium prep bowls (3)
- Small prep bowls (4)
- Large prep bowls (2)
- Whisk
- Spatula (for flipping hash browns)
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Cutting board and chef's knife

## Hints and Notes

### Yield

- Serves 6–8 as main breakfast
- Makes one 10–12 inch skillet casserole

### Mise en Place

- *Medium Bowl #1* — thawed, squeezed-dry **hash browns** (20 oz.)
- *Small Bowl #1* — aromatics: diced **onion** (1 medium), minced **garlic** (3–4 cloves)
- *Small Bowl #2* — drained **mushrooms** (8 oz. can)
- *Large Bowl #1* — shredded **cheddar** (2 cups) and **smoked Gouda** (1 cup) combined; 1½ cups go into egg mixture, 1½ cups for topping
- *Small Bowl #3* — halved **cherry tomatoes** (¾–1 cup)
- *Small Bowl #4* — sliced **green onion** (2–3 stalks, for finish)
- *Medium Bowl #2* — cooked, crumbled **bacon/sausage** (created in step 1)
- *Medium Bowl #3* — sautéed **onion, garlic, and mushrooms** (created in step 2)
- *Large Bowl #2* — **egg mixture**: beaten eggs with spices, meat, aromatics, and half the cheese (built in step 4)
- Thaw **hash browns** in refrigerator overnight or under cold running water; squeeze very dry to avoid a soggy crust

## Ingredient Tips

- Use any combination of **bacon** and **sausage** totaling 1 lb.; thick-cut **bacon** gives the best texture
- **Smoked Gouda** pairs well with the **smoked paprika**; sharp **cheddar** adds tang
- Frozen **shredded hash browns** are easiest; squeeze out all excess moisture after thawing
- **White pepper** adds warmth without speckling; omit if you don't have it
- **Cherry tomatoes** can be omitted or reduced if you prefer less moisture on top

## Preparation Tips

- Flipping the **hash brown** layer in one piece is easier when the bottom is fully golden and releases cleanly; use a large spatula or flip in two halves
- After the meat, leave 2 Tbsp. fat for the aromatics; after sautéing, if the pan is dry, add the full 1–2 Tbsp. **butter** or reserved fat so **hash browns** brown and release cleanly
- **Ground mustard** and **thyme** make the eggs taste much richer; don't skip them
- The casserole is done when the center no longer flows and the top is lightly golden; overcooking will dry out the eggs
- Rest 5 minutes before slicing so the egg layer sets for cleaner portions
- Best served hot; the hash brown layer is crispiest right out of the oven

## Make Ahead & Storage

- Cook **bacon/sausage** and sauté **aromatics** up to 1 day ahead; store covered in refrigerator
- Assemble and bake the same day for best texture
- Leftovers keep 3–4 days refrigerated, covered
- Reheat portions in a skillet or microwave, or reheat the whole casserole at 350°F for 15–20 minutes until hot
- Freezes adequately for 2–3 months; thaw in refrigerator before reheating (**hash browns** may soften)

## Serving Suggestions

- Serve hot from the skillet with **green onion** on top; season with salt and pepper at the table if desired
- Hot sauce, sour cream, or avocado on the side
- Pair with fruit salad or simple greens
- Excellent for brunch or weekend breakfast