

# Old-Fashioned Potato-Beef Casserole

Our Young Chefs, 2015

Makes 6 to 8 servings

*This comfort-food casserole is sure to please the family, yet is definitely nice enough to make for company or to take to a covered-dish dinner.*



## INGREDIENTS

3 to 3½ pounds red potatoes, peeled,  
sliced ¼-inch thick  
Water  
½ teaspoon salt  
Pam cooking-oil spray OR unsalted butter

8 ounces cremini mushrooms, ¼-inch dice  
½ to ¾ large onion, ¼-inch dice  
½ to ¾ red bell pepper, ¼-inch dice  
1 to 1½ tablespoons vegetable oil  
1 to 1½ pounds lean ground beef, turkey  
or chicken  
Salt and freshly ground pepper

6 tablespoons (¾ stick/3 ounces)  
unsalted  
butter  
6 tablespoons flour  
½ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper  
2¾ cups lowfat milk  
4 ounces cream cheese (*optional*)  
2 cups (8 ounces) sharp or mild Cheddar,  
coarsely shredded

## DIRECTIONS

**Prepare the potatoes:** Wash, peel and cut the potatoes as described. Place the potatoes in a large saucepan with water to cover by 1 inch; add the salt. Over high heat bring to a boil; when the water is boiling, lower the heat to medium and cook for 12 to 15 minutes, or until tender. Potatoes cook quickly. After about 10 minutes of cooking time, begin to test for tenderness; do not overcook the potatoes. Drain the potatoes; layer *half* of the potatoes into a **greased (Pam) or buttered** 13- by 9-inch casserole dish. Leave the remaining potatoes in the pan until later.

**Prepare the additional vegetables:** While the potatoes are cooking, dice the mushrooms, onion and bell pepper as described. Heat a heavy 12-inch or larger skillet over medium-high heat. Add the oil; heat for about 30 seconds. Add the mushrooms; cook for about 3 minutes until there is no more moisture. Add the ground meat, onion and bell pepper; cook over medium heat until the meat is browned and the vegetables are softened, about 10 minutes. Season lightly with salt and pepper while the mixture cooks. Drain any excess fat.

**Prepare the cheese sauce:** Preheat the oven to 375°F. In a 4- or 6-quart saucepan, melt the butter; whisk in the flour, salt and pepper. Cook over medium heat, whisking constantly, until the mixture bubbles and the flour turns light brown in color. Gradually whisk in the milk and cream cheese; continue to stir while cooking over medium heat. When the sauce mixture thickens, lower the heat to the lowest setting; stir in the shredded cheese and browned meat/vegetable mixture. Stir to heat through.

**Assemble the casserole:** Pour half of the ground beef mixture over the potatoes in the casserole. Layer the remaining potatoes in the casserole dish, followed by the remaining ground beef mixture as the last/top layer. →

---

**Bake:** Place the **casserole** in the 375°F oven, uncovered, for 25 to 30 minutes until heated through and beginning to bubble -- the interior temperature of the **casserole** should reach at least 175°F or higher on an instant-read thermometer. (If all of the **ingredients** are hot when the **casserole** is assembled, the cooking time may be shorter than this.)

---

TOPPING

1 cup store-purchased French-fried  
onions, slightly crushed

**Add the casserole topping; brown and serve:** When the casserole *barely* begins to bubble (shortly before the **casserole** is finished cooking), remove the **casserole** from the oven; sprinkle the **French-fried onion topping** over the **casserole**. Return to the oven; bake 5 or so minutes longer to brown the **onion topping**. Serve

---