

Chicken Pasta Bake Recipes

Tomato penne chicken bake with melted mozzarella

Prep 15 min | Cook 40 min | Rest 5 min | Serves 4 | Easy

This baked pasta combines chicken breast, penne and a quick tomato-oregano sauce under a layer of mozzarella. Slightly undercook the penne first so it finishes tender in the oven.

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 lb (680 g) boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) olive oil
- 1/2 tsp (3 g) fine salt
- 2 cups (480 ml) tomato passata
- 1 cup (112 g) grated mozzarella made with microbial rennet
- 12 oz (340 g) dried penne
- 3 garlic cloves (9 g), minced
- 1/4 tsp (0.5 g) black pepper
- 1 tsp (1 g) dried oregano
- 1 cup (240 ml) reserved pasta water, as needed

Recipe note: The mozzarella specified uses microbial rennet. Reserve pasta water before draining the penne.

Method

1. Cook penne in boiling water for 2 minutes less than the package time. Reserve 1 cup (240 ml) pasta water, then drain.
2. Heat oven to 375°F (190°C). Season chicken with salt and pepper. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook chicken for 8–12 minutes, turning, until every thick piece reaches 165°F (74°C) on a food thermometer. Transfer to a clean plate.
3. Stir garlic into the skillet for 30 seconds. Add passata and oregano; simmer for 5 minutes. Combine the sauce with chicken and penne in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Add a splash of reserved pasta water if the mixture looks dry.
4. Top evenly with mozzarella. Bake 20–25 minutes, until hot throughout and the center reaches 165°F (74°C). Rest for 5 minutes, divide into four portions and serve hot.

Chicken doneness and food safety

Cook raw chicken to 165°F (74°C), measured with a food thermometer in several of the largest pieces. Keep raw poultry and its utensils separate from ready-to-eat food. For the pasta bake, also check the center of the casserole reaches 165°F (74°C).

Tips and variations

- Reserve pasta water before draining; add it a little at a time if the pasta mixture needs moisture.
- Browning alone does not confirm chicken doneness. Check the thickest pieces with a thermometer before assembling.
- Avoid crowding the skillet; cook chicken in batches if needed. Taste the sauce before adding extra salt.

Storage, freezing and reheating

Refrigerate leftovers in shallow covered containers within 2 hours, or within 1 hour above 90°F (32°C). Keep at 40°F (4°C) or below and use within 3–4 days, counting any prior storage time of cooked chicken. Freeze cooled portions airtight for up to 2 months for best quality; thaw in the refrigerator. Reheat in a covered oven dish at 350°F (175°C) or gently in a saucepan, adding a splash of water as needed, until 165°F (74°C) throughout. Stir sauces and check several spots; do not reheat leftovers in a slow cooker.

Quick FAQs

Can I make this ahead? Prepare and refrigerate the components separately, then cook the chicken and assemble as directed.

How do I know the chicken is cooked? Check every thick piece with a thermometer; it must reach 165°F (74°C).

Can I use frozen chicken? Thaw it safely in the refrigerator before following this recipe.