

Leek and Bacon Pasta Bake

This is one of those speedy suppers that doesn't require very much effort. The result is a really comforting dish of sweet leeks, meaty bacon, pasta and a creamy cheese sauce. Serve with a fresh green salad for a great midweek treat.

Nutritional information per portion (342g):



Wheat/gluten and dairy

Equipment

- Chopping boards x 2
- Sharp knife x 2
- Colander
- Kettle
- Weighing scales
- Large saucepan
- Frying pan
- Spatula
- Pan stands x 2
- Grater
- Measuring jug
- Wooden spoon
- Measuring spoons
- Shallow ovenproof serving dish (approx. 1.5 litres)
- Oven gloves
- Pan stand

Ingredients

- Serves 4**
- 2 medium leeks (approx 320g)
 - 4 bacon rashers
 - 300g pasta shapes
 - 1 x 15ml spoon vegetable oil or small amount of spray oil
 - 85g reduced-fat Cheddar cheese
 - 200g reduced-fat soft cream cheese
 - 1 x 5ml spoon Dijon mustard
 - Ground black pepper (optional)



Top Tips

- To make a crispier topping, try sprinkling some breadcrumbs over the pasta bake, with the cheese, before placing under the grill.

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Method

1. Top and tail the leeks and discard the outer layer. Rinse in a colander under running water and then chop finely into rings 1/2cm wide.
2. Using a separate chopping board and knife, remove all visible fat from the bacon and chop roughly into 2cm squares, then wash your hands.
3. Place the pasta in a large saucepan. Cover the pasta with boiling water and cook, according to the packet instructions, until al dente.
4. Heat the vegetable oil in the frying pan over a medium heat, add the bacon and cook for 4 minutes until crispy. Add the leeks and gently cook for 5–10 minutes until soft.
5. Meanwhile, grate the Cheddar cheese and preheat the grill to a medium heat.
6. Drain the pasta, retaining 150ml of the cooking water.
7. Return the pasta to the saucepan and stir in the leeks, bacon, cream cheese, mustard, reserved cooking water and ½ of the grated cheese.
8. Season with black pepper to taste (if using), and transfer the mixture to the ovenproof dish.
9. Sprinkle the remaining cheese over the pasta and then place the dish under the grill for 3 minutes, or until the cheese melts and turns golden brown.

Something to try next time

- Why not try adding 140g of frozen peas to the frying pan at the end of step 4, heating them through for three minutes.
- To reduce the number of pans required, try cooking the leeks in with the pasta water and chopping cooking ham into the pasta mixture, instead of bacon.

Prepare now, eat later

- Chop the leeks and grate the cheese in advance and store them in separate sealed containers in the fridge for up to 2 days.
- If you would like to prepare this pasta dish in advance and bake it later, add 300ml of the cooking water instead of 150ml. Then bake in a preheated oven at 180°C/160°C degrees fan or gas mark 4 for 25–30 minutes or until hot and bubbling.

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