



Kitchen Cheat Sheet: Hamburger Noodle Casserole

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Tips and Time Savers

- I always prefer using freshly shredded sharp cheddar cheese from a block of cheese than pre-shredded cheese which contains anti-caking agents for an extended shelf life. The freshly shredded cheese tastes so much better and also melts beautifully.
- While I've used Jack Pepper cheese as the cheese topping for this casserole, feel free to use another cheese. I don't suggest something mild like mozzarella cheese for this, though.
- Since the egg noodles will cook for an additional 20 minutes in the oven in the casserole I recommend that you only cook them al dente before adding them to the casserole mixture. That way they won't get mushy.
- If you make this ahead of time you may find the noodle mixture soaks up more cheesy sauce while in storage. If so, just add a little additional sauce or even a splash of milk, in the casserole mixture before topping the casserole with cheese for baking in the oven.
- Use a more lean ground beef in this recipe for the best results. 90/10 or even 95/5... 80/20 tends to make it a little greasy.

Storage

I think that this recipe is better the second day!

Refrigerate

Hamburger noodle casserole can be refrigerated for up to 3 days when stored in an airtight container or in the casserole dish, covered with plastic wrap.

Freeze

You can also freeze this casserole for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and then reheat in the oven till warm throughout.

Nice to have

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If you're still buying pre-shredded cheese, I'm not mad — just disappointed. This box-style cheese grater has three stainless steel blades, a built-in garlic crusher, a veggie peeler for when you're pretending to eat healthy, and a storage box that actually catches all your freshly grated cheese. No more chasing cheddar across the counter like a caffeinated raccoon. It's sturdy, smart, and about to be your new favorite kitchen wingman.

Check it out!

Variations

- Use ground turkey or ground chicken.
- Use any pasta you prefer; spaghetti noodles, elbow macaroni, ziti, penne...
- Add hot sauce to the wet ingredients.
- Stir in a cup of sour cream for an extra creamy texture.
- Add a pinch of cayenne or chipotle powder to kick things up.
- Sliced jalapeños are great sauteed with the onions.
- Add in a can of chopped chiles.
- Add bell peppers. I like to use a colorful bell pepper mix.
- Use sharp Cheddar cheese, American, or plain Monterey Jack cheese.
- We love it with crispy fried onions baked right on top.
- To increase the texture and body of your casserole, consider adding some frozen peas, corn, and chopped carrots into the noodle mixture. It's a sneaky way to get the kids to eat their veggies!

FAQs

Do I have to use cream of mushroom soup?

Nope. Swap it for cream of celery, cream of chicken, or double down on cream of tomato if that's what you've got. This casserole isn't picky — it just wants to be loved and eaten.

Can I use different pasta?

Sure can. Elbow macaroni, rotini, penne — whatever's in your pantry will work. Just don't overcook it before baking or you'll end up with casserole mush, and nobody wants that.

What cheese works best?

Pepper Jack brings a little sass, but cheddar, Colby Jack, or Monterey Jack are all happy to join the party. Use what you have and pretend it was a deliberate artistic choice.

Can I make this hamburger casserole ahead of time?

Yes, you can! You can assemble it up to 3 days ahead of time, leaving the cheese off, and refrigerate. You can also freeze it for up to 3 months.

Can I freeze this creamy hamburger casserole?

You bet your cast iron you can. Wrap it tight (plastic wrap + foil = fortress), and it'll keep for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in the fridge, then bake until hot and bubbly. Bonus: it reheats beautifully, which makes it basically a weeknight miracle.

How should I cook the egg noodles?

Egg noodles will usually take 8-10 minutes to cook in boiling water. Don't overcook because they'll continue to cook in the oven.