



Kitchen Cheat Sheet: =Pimento Cheese Chicken Casserole

Tips

- Salt your pasta water like you mean it. If it tastes like regret before it hits the oven, it's not getting better later.
- Don't overcook the pasta. Al dente. Firm. A little attitude. It's going back in the oven—don't turn it into mush on step one.
- Drain that broccoli. Frozen broccoli holds onto water like it's emotionally attached. Thaw it, pat it dry, and move on.
- Season the mixture before it bakes. Taste it. Adjust it. This is your moment. Don't send it into the oven bland and hoping for a miracle.
- Hold back some cheese for the top. I know it's hard. Show restraint for five minutes so you get that melty, golden finish instead of a disappearing act.
- Use a big enough bowl. Unless you enjoy chasing pasta across the counter like it owes you money.
- Let it rest before serving. Just a few minutes. It'll set up, behave better, and stop trying to slide off the spoon like it's making an escape.
- Double it if you've got people. Or don't. But don't come crying when it's gone and someone's scraping the dish like a raccoon with the munchies.

Variations

- Make it spicy: Toss in diced jalapeños, a shake of hot sauce, or a pinch of cayenne. Now it bites back just a little. We love a casserole with boundaries.
- Swap the protein
- Change the pasta: No penne? Use rotini, ziti, shells—whatever's lurking in the pantry judging you. Just keep it sturdy enough to hold the sauce.
- Vegetable shuffle: Not feeling broccoli? Try cauliflower, peas, or a mixed veggie blend. Or skip it entirely and live your truth.
- Upgrade the topping: Swap Ritz for crushed pretzels, buttery breadcrumbs, or even fried onions if you're feeling chaotic good.
- Add bacon: Because obviously. Crispy bits stirred in or scattered on top will make people act like you invented cooking.
- Make it lighter (if you must): Low-fat soup, less cheese, whole wheat pasta... it'll still be good, just don't expect the same level of applause.

Storage

- Fridge:
 - Scoop leftovers into an airtight container and refrigerate up to 3–4 days. The flavors get cozier overnight, like they had a little meeting and decided to improve themselves.
- Reheat:
 - Microwave if you're impatient. Oven (covered, 325°F) if you want that creamy texture back instead of “mystery casserole paste.” Add a splash of milk if it's acting dry and dramatic.
- Freeze:
 - You can freeze it for up to 2 months. Just know the texture might come back a little... nostalgic. Still good, just not winning any beauty pageants.
- Pro tip:
 - If you're planning ahead, freeze it without the cracker topping and add that fresh before baking. Nobody deserves soggy Ritz energy.

FAQs

Can I use rotisserie chicken?

Yes, and you should. Let the grocery store do the heavy lifting while you take the credit like a responsible adult.

Can I make this ahead of time?

Absolutely. Assemble it, cover it, and stash it in the fridge. When you're ready, bake it like you planned your life this well all along.

Can I freeze it?

You can. Just know the texture might get a little... nostalgic. Still edible, still comforting, just not winning any beauty contests.

Do I have to use cream of chicken soup?

No, but then you're making things harder for yourself on purpose. You can swap in a homemade version if you're feeling ambitious and well-rested.

What kind of cheese works best?

Sharp cheddar is the usual suspect, but honestly? Anything that melts well and makes you happy. This is not the time for restraint.

Can I leave out the broccoli?

Sure, if you're not interested in pretending this has a vegetable. You can swap it for something else... or just embrace your truth.

Why add the cheese at the end?

Because we want a melty, golden top—not a disappearing act. Timing is everything, even in casseroles.

How do I know when it's done?

Hot, bubbly edges and a top that looks like it means business. An insta-read thermometer will read 165F