Prep Time: 20 minutes
Cook Time: 35 minutes
Total Time: 55 minutes
Servings: 6
Calories: ~310 kcal per serving

Table of Contents

- Why You'll Love This Bake
- Ingredients
    - For the Vegetables
    - For the Cheese Sauce
    - For the Crumb Topping
- Equipment Needed
- Instructions
    - Phase 1: Prep & Blanch (Time: 12 mins | Intensity: Medium)
    - Phase 2: The Cheese Sauce (Time: 10 mins | Intensity: High)
    - Phase 3: Assemble (Time: 5 mins | Intensity: Low)
    - Phase 4: The Crumb Topping & Bake (Time: 20 mins | Intensity: Low)
- Intensity & Timing Guide (At a Glance)
- Recipe Notes & Tips
- Nutrition Facts (Estimated)

Why You'll Love This Bake

Getting your family to eat their vegetables has never been easier. This Cheesy Vegetable Bake takes humble broccoli, cauliflower, and carrots and transforms them into a bubbling, golden, irresistible comfort dish. The vegetables are lightly steamed until tender-crisp, then folded into a velvety homemade cheese sauce made with sharp cheddar and a whisper of

nutmeg, topped with buttery breadcrumbs, and baked until the edges caramelize and the top turns gloriously crispy. It works beautifully as a holiday side dish, a potluck contribution, or even a satisfying vegetarian main course with a side salad and crusty bread. The best part? It is endlessly adaptable—swap in whatever vegetables you have on hand, and it will still turn out delicious.

Ingredients

For the Vegetables

- 3 cups broccoli florets (about 1 medium head)
- 3 cups cauliflower florets (about 1/2 large head)
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and sliced into 1/4-inch rounds
- 1 cup frozen peas (no need to thaw)
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and black pepper to taste

For the Cheese Sauce

- 3 tbsp unsalted butter
- 3 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 2 cups whole milk (or half-and-half for a richer sauce)
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp ground nutmeg (freshly grated if possible)
- 1/4 tsp smoked paprika
- 2 cups sharp cheddar cheese, freshly grated (about 8 oz)
- 1/2 cup Gruyère or Swiss cheese, freshly grated (optional but delicious)
- Salt and white pepper to taste

For the Crumb Topping

- 1 cup panko breadcrumbs

- 3 tbsp unsalted butter, melted
- 2 tbsp fresh parsley, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese, freshly grated

Equipment Needed

- Large pot (for blanching vegetables)
- Medium saucepan (for cheese sauce)
- Whisk
- 9×13-inch baking dish
- Colander
- Small bowl (for crumb topping)
- Cutting board and chef’s knife

Instructions

Phase 1: Prep & Blanch (Time: 12 mins | Intensity: Medium)

1. Prep the Vegetables: Cut the broccoli and cauliflower into evenly sized florets so they cook at the same rate. Peel and slice the carrots into thin rounds. Grate all the cheeses—freshly grated cheese melts far more smoothly than pre-shredded, which contains anti-caking agents.

2. Boil the Water: Bring a large pot of generously salted water to a rolling boil.

3. Blanch: Add the carrots first and cook for 2 minutes, then add the broccoli and cauliflower and cook for another 3 minutes, until the vegetables are bright in color and just tender-crisp. They will continue cooking in the oven, so do not overcook them now.

4. Shock & Drain: Drain the vegetables in a colander and immediately rinse with cold water (or plunge into an ice bath) to stop the cooking process and preserve their vibrant color. Drain thoroughly and pat dry.

Phase 2: The Cheese Sauce (Time: 10 mins | Intensity: High)

1. Make a Roux: In a medium saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat. Whisk in the flour and cook for 1–2 minutes, whisking constantly, until the mixture is bubbling and smells lightly toasted. This removes the raw flour taste.

2. Add the Milk: Slowly pour in the milk in a steady stream, whisking constantly to prevent lumps. Continue whisking until the sauce is smooth and has thickened enough to coat the back of a spoon, about 4–5 minutes.

3. Season: Whisk in the Dijon mustard, garlic powder, nutmeg, smoked paprika, salt, and white pepper.

4. Melt the Cheese: Remove the saucepan from the heat. Stir in the grated cheddar (and Gruyère, if using) a handful at a time, stirring until each addition is fully melted before adding more. Do not boil the sauce after the cheese is added, or it may become grainy.

5. Taste & Adjust: Taste the sauce and adjust the seasoning. It should be rich, cheesy, and well-seasoned since it will flavor all the vegetables.

Phase 3: Assemble (Time: 5 mins | Intensity: Low)

1. Preheat the Oven: Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C). Lightly grease a 9×13-inch baking dish with olive oil or butter.

2. Combine: In a large bowl, combine the blanched broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, and frozen peas. Pour the cheese sauce over the vegetables and gently fold together until everything is evenly coated.

3. Transfer: Pour the mixture into the prepared baking dish, spreading it into an even layer.

Phase 4: The Crumb Topping & Bake (Time: 20 mins | Intensity: Low)

1. Make the Topping: In a small bowl, combine the panko breadcrumbs, melted butter, chopped parsley, and Parmesan cheese. Stir until the crumbs are evenly moistened.

2. Top the Bake: Sprinkle the crumb mixture evenly over the top of the vegetables.

3. Bake: Bake uncovered for 18–22 minutes, until the sauce is bubbling at the edges and the topping is golden brown and crispy.

4. Rest & Serve: Let the bake rest for 5 minutes before serving—this allows the sauce to set slightly and makes portioning easier. Garnish with extra fresh parsley if desired.

Intensity & Timing Guide (At a Glance)

Phase	Task	Time	Intensity Level
Prep	Chopping & grating cheese	12 mins	Medium (Knife work + grating)
Blanch	Par-cooking vegetables	5 mins	Medium (Timing matters)
Sauce	Whisking roux & melting cheese	10 mins	High (Constant attention required)
Assemble	Mixing & layering	5 mins	Low (Relaxed)
Bake	Oven time	20 mins	Low (Hands-off)

Recipe Notes & Tips

- Vegetable Variations: This recipe is highly flexible. Try swapping in green beans, Brussels sprouts (halved), butternut squash cubes, or leeks. Just adjust blanching times based on the vegetable's density—root vegetables need longer, tender vegetables need less.

- Make-Ahead: Assemble the bake up to 24 hours in advance, cover, and refrigerate. Add the crumb topping just before baking and add 5–8 minutes to the bake time since it will go into the oven cold.

- Cheese Choices: Sharp cheddar gives the best flavor, but you can experiment with smoked gouda (for a smoky note), fontina (for meltability), or pepper jack (for heat). Avoid very soft cheeses like brie, which can turn oily when baked.

- Gluten-Free Option: Use a gluten-free all-purpose flour blend in the roux and gluten-free panko for the topping.

- Avoid a Grainy Sauce: The two keys to a smooth cheese sauce are (1) grating the cheese yourself and (2) adding it off the heat, stirring gently until melted. High heat is the enemy of smooth cheese sauce.

- Storage: Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days. Reheat in a 350°F (175°C) oven for 10–15 minutes, covered, to prevent the topping from burning.

Nutrition Facts (Estimated)

Based on 6 servings. Nutritional values are estimates and will vary based on specific ingredients used.

- Calories: 312 kcal
- Total Fat: 19g (Saturated Fat: 11g)
- Cholesterol: 52mg
- Sodium: 480mg
- Total Carbohydrates: 22g (Dietary Fiber: 4g, Sugars: 7g)
- Protein: 14g
- Vitamin A: 60% DV
- Vitamin C: 75% DV
- Calcium: 30% DV
- Iron: 10% DV