

- Prep Time: 15 minutes
  - Cook Time: 30 minutes
  - Total Time: 45 minutes
  - Intensity Level: Easy / Beginner (No advanced knife skills required)
  - Servings: 4
  - Category: Main Course / Casserole
  - Cuisine: American Comfort
- 

## Table of Contents

- ◆
- [Introduction](#)
- [Ingredients](#)
  - [The Base](#)
  - [The Veggies](#)
  - [The Creamy Cheese Sauce](#)
  - [Optional Garnish](#)
- [Instructions](#)
  - [Step 1: Preheat and Prep](#)
  - [Step 2: Season the Chicken](#)

- [Step 3: Sear the Chicken \(Optional but Recommended\)](#)
- [Step 4: Sauté the Aromatics and Veggies](#)
- [Step 5: Create the Creamy Sauce](#)
- [Step 6: Combine and Bake](#)
- [Step 7: The Cheese Layer](#)
- [Step 8: Bake to Perfection](#)
- [Step 9: Rest and Serve](#)
- [Recipe Notes & Tips](#)
- [Nutrition Information](#)

## Introduction

There is something magical about a casserole. It's the culinary equivalent of a warm hug on a cold day. But often, casseroles can be heavy, loaded with cream-of-something soups, or lacking in the vegetable department.

Enter: the Easy Cheesy Chicken Veggie Bake.

This recipe was born out of a desire to clean out the fridge while still putting a dinner on the table that my family would actually cheer for. It combines tender chunks of chicken breast with vibrant, crisp-tender vegetables, all brought together by a creamy, garlicky sauce and topped with a golden layer of melted cheddar and mozzarella.

Whether you are a busy parent, a college student learning to cook, or just someone who wants a delicious, high-protein meal with minimal cleanup, this recipe is for you. It is naturally gluten-free (if you check your spices) and can easily be adapted to be Keto or Whole30 compliant.

Let's dive into the ultimate comfort food that loves you back.

---

## Ingredients

To make this delicious bake, you will need the following ingredients. I recommend using fresh vegetables for the best texture, but frozen works in a pinch (just thaw and drain them first).

### The Base

- 1.5 lbs (680g) Boneless, Skinless Chicken Breast: Cut into bite-sized, 1-inch cubes. You can also use chicken thighs for a juicier, darker meat option.
- 2 tbsp Olive Oil: Divided. Avocado oil works great too.
- 1 tsp Garlic Powder
- 1 tsp Onion Powder
- 1 tsp Smoked Paprika: This adds a wonderful depth of flavor.
- ½ tsp Salt (plus more to taste)
- ½ tsp Black Pepper

### The Veggies

- 2 cups Broccoli Florets: Cut into small, bite-sized pieces.

- 1 Large Red Bell Pepper: Diced into 1-inch squares.
- 1 Medium Zucchini: Sliced into half-moons. (If zucchini is watery, salt it and pat dry before adding).
- 1 cup Mushrooms: Sliced (white button or cremini).
- ½ Red Onion: Roughly chopped.

## **The Creamy Cheese Sauce**

- 4 oz (113g) Cream Cheese: Room temperature is best so it melts smoothly. You can use full-fat or ⅓ less fat.
- ½ cup Heavy Cream: Or whole milk for a lighter version.
- 2 cloves Garlic: Minced finely.
- 1 tsp Italian Seasoning
- ½ cup Chicken Broth: Low sodium.
- 1 cup Shredded Cheddar Cheese: Sharp cheddar adds the best flavor.
- ½ cup Shredded Mozzarella Cheese: For that perfect cheese pull.

- ¼ cup Grated Parmesan Cheese: For the topping.

## Optional Garnish

- Fresh Parsley or Basil, chopped.
  - Red Pepper Flakes for a kick.
- 

## Instructions

### Step 1: Preheat and Prep

Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C). Lightly grease a 9×13 inch baking dish with non-stick spray or a drizzle of olive oil.

*Intensity Check:* Low. Just measuring and turning on the oven.

### Step 2: Season the Chicken

In a large bowl, combine the cubed chicken, 1 tablespoon of olive oil, garlic powder, onion powder, smoked paprika, salt, and pepper. Toss until the chicken is evenly coated.

*Intensity Check:* Low. Mixing with hands or a spoon.

### Step 3: Sear the Chicken (Optional but Recommended)

While you *can* put raw chicken straight into the bake, taking 5 minutes to sear it makes a world of difference.

Heat a large skillet over Medium-High heat. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Once

shimmering, add the chicken in a single layer (do it in two batches if your pan is small). Sear for 2-3 minutes per side until golden brown. You do not need to cook it all the way through; it will finish in the oven.

Remove chicken from pan and set aside.

*Intensity Check:* Medium. Requires attention to not burn the chicken.

## **Step 4: Sauté the Aromatics and Veggies**

In the same skillet (don't wash it! The fond adds flavor), reduce heat to Medium. Add the garlic and sauté for 30 seconds until fragrant. Add the mushrooms and onions. Sauté for 3-4 minutes until they begin to soften.

Add the broccoli, bell pepper, and zucchini. Sauté for another 3-4 minutes. You want the veggies to be slightly softened but still vibrant (al dente).

*Intensity Check:* Medium. Stirring occasionally.

## **Step 5: Create the Creamy Sauce**

Reduce the heat to Low. Add the cream cheese and heavy cream (or milk) to the skillet with the veggies. Stir gently until the cream cheese has melted completely and the sauce is smooth.

Pour in the chicken broth and stir in the Italian seasoning. Let it simmer for 2 minutes until slightly thickened. Turn off the heat.

*Intensity Check:* Low to Medium. Gentle stirring.

## **Step 6: Combine and Bake**

Return the seared chicken (and any juices on the plate) to the skillet with the veggies and sauce. Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the shredded cheddar and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the mozzarella. Stir everything together until the cheese is melted and everything is coated.

Transfer the entire mixture into your greased 9×13 baking dish. Spread it into an even layer.

*Intensity Check:* Low.

## Step 7: The Cheese Layer

In a small bowl, mix the remaining cheddar, remaining mozzarella, and the Parmesan cheese. Sprinkle this mixture generously and evenly over the top of the casserole.

*Intensity Check:* Low.

## Step 8: Bake to Perfection

Place the dish in the preheated oven. Bake for 20-25 minutes.

You will know it is done when the cheese is bubbly, golden brown on top, and the chicken is cooked through (internal temperature of 165°F/74°C).

*Intensity Check:* Low (Passive cooking time).

## Step 9: Rest and Serve

Remove the dish from the oven and let it rest for 5 minutes. This allows the juices to redistribute and the sauce to thicken.

Garnish with fresh parsley and serve hot!

---

## Recipe Notes & Tips

- The “Watery” Issue: Zucchini and mushrooms release water when cooked. Searing the chicken and sautéing the veggies *before* baking is the secret to preventing a watery casserole. If you are short on time and want to skip the searing, your bake might be a bit soupy—just drain the liquid before serving or add a tablespoon of almond flour to the sauce to thicken.
- Cheese Variations: Don’t be afraid to swap cheeses. Gouda, Monterey Jack, or Pepper Jack are excellent choices.

- Keto/Low Carb: This recipe is naturally low carb! Just ensure your chicken broth and spices don't have added sugars.
  - Make it Ahead: You can assemble this bake up to 24 hours in advance. Cover with foil and store in the fridge. When ready to bake, add 10 minutes to the cooking time (keep the foil on for the first 15 minutes to prevent the cheese from burning).
- 

## Nutrition Information

*Disclaimer: Nutrition facts are estimates and will vary based on exact ingredients and brands used.*

Per Serving (1/4 of the recipe):

- Calories: 580 kcal
- Total Fat: 38g
- Saturated Fat: 19g
- Cholesterol: 175mg
- Sodium: 780mg
- Total Carbohydrates: 12g

- Dietary Fiber: 4g
- Sugars: 6g
- Protein: 48g

Vitamins & Minerals (approx % Daily Value):

- Vitamin A: 40%
- Vitamin C: 90%
- Calcium: 35%
- Iron: 15%