

Seasonal Eating
Whitney Danhof, Extension Agent

Hearty Comfort for Cooler Weather
October 2024

As the cooler fall months settle in, our menus turn to more hearty, hot and filling meals. Soups are one of those dishes and chili in particular comes out in October. In fact, many people serve chili on Halloween as it is an easy come and go meal while spooks and goblins go door to door. Another good option, though, for casual celebrations such as Halloween, game day meals and fall weekday dinners are casseroles.

These all-in-one dishes meet all the requirements for fall and winter. They are hearty and hot and will feed a crowd. They can be made a day ahead and popped into the oven when needed and leftovers are as good as the original. You can also set them out for a couple of hours as people drop by for a meal. Add some crusty bread and maybe a salad or fruit and you're ready to go.



Chicken casseroles are some of my favorites. There are so many variations with the vegetables, sauces and toppings. Below, is one that is packed with flavor due to the unusual combination of sour cream and bottled Italian salad dressing for the sauce. I have a taco salad recipe that uses this combination in a dressing with chili powder and have always loved the tangy, bright flavor. The other flavor boost is the seasoning packet that comes with the long grain and wild rice mix. Full of dried herbs and aromatics, it ramps up the flavor without a lot of effort.

Because this recipe is so packed with flavor, the chicken can be cooked with just some salt and pepper and boiled until tender and shredded. Or for an even easier option, you could use a deli roasted chicken and shred the meat.

So as you plan your fall celebration gatherings and family meals, keep casseroles on the list for a filling, delicious option and give this recipe a try. For more information and recipes check out the Seasonal Eating page at bedford.tennessee.edu.

Chicken and Wild Rice Casserole

- 1 6.2 ounce package long grain and wild rice mix
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1 (8-ounce) package fresh sliced mushrooms
- 1/2 onion, chopped
- 2 ribs celery, chopped
- 12 ounces sour cream
- 3/4 cup Italian salad dressing
- 3 cups chopped cooked chicken

1/2 (8-ounce) can sliced water chestnuts, chopped
1 (4-ounce) jar chopped pimientos, drained
1 1/2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese

Cook rice in a large saucepan, using 2 cups chicken broth instead of water. In a skillet, melt the butter and add mushrooms, onion and celery. Sauté until softened and the liquid is cooked out. In a large bowl, stir together the sour cream and salad dressing. Add the cooked vegetables, chicken, water chestnuts and pimientos. Spoon into a lightly greased 2-quart baking dish. Bake at 325 degrees for 20 minutes. Sprinkle the cheese over the top and bake another 10 minutes or until thoroughly heated and cheese is melted