

Leek and Bacon Pasta Bake

This is one of those speedy suppers that doesn't require very much effort. The result is a really comforting dish of sweet leeks, meaty bacon, pasta and a creamy cheese sauce. Serve with a fresh green salad for a great midweek treat.



Milk, mustard, soya, sulphites and wheat (gluten)*

Nutritional information per portion (333g):

Energy	Fat	Saturates	Sugars	Salt
1651kJ 393kcal 20%	15g 22%	5.5g 28%	3g 3%	1.6g 27%

of an adult's reference intake.
Typical values per 100g: energy 496kJ/118kcal.

Equipment

Weighing scales
Chopping board x 2
Sharp knife x 2
Colander
Kettle
Large saucepan
Frying pan
Measuring spoons
Spatula
Pan stand x 2
Blender
Measuring jug
Wooden spoon
Shallow ovenproof serving dish (approx. 1½ litres)
Oven gloves
Pan stand

Ingredients

Serves 4
2 medium leeks
4 rashers unsmoked bacon
300g pasta shapes
1 x 15ml spoon vegetable oil
OR small amount of spray oil
1 thick slice wholemeal bread
200g reduced-fat soft cream cheese
1 x 5ml spoon Dijon mustard
Ground black pepper (optional)

*Presence of allergens can vary by brand – always check product labels. If you serve food outside the home you must make allergen information available when asked.



Top Tip

- Be careful not to burn the breadcrumb topping. Reduce the heat under the grill to low if necessary.

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Method

1. Top and tail the leeks and discard the outer layer. Rinse in a colander under running water and then chop finely into rings ½cm wide.
2. Using a separate chopping board and knife, remove all visible fat from the bacon and chop roughly into 2cm squares, then wash your hands.
3. Place the pasta in a large saucepan. Cover the pasta with boiling water and cook, according to the packet instructions, until al dente (still has a little bite).
4. Heat the vegetable oil in the frying pan over a medium heat, add the bacon and cook for 4 minutes until crispy. Add the leeks and gently cook for 5–10 minutes until soft.
5. Meanwhile, break the bread into pieces, put into the blender and make the breadcrumbs. Preheat the grill to a medium heat.
6. Drain the pasta, retaining 150ml of the cooking water.
7. Return the pasta to the saucepan and stir in the leeks, bacon, cream cheese, mustard and reserved cooking water.
8. Season with black pepper to taste (if using), and transfer the mixture to the ovenproof dish.
9. Sprinkle the breadcrumbs over the pasta and then place the dish under the grill for 3 minutes, or until the breadcrumbs are crisp and golden.

Something to try next time

- Why not try adding 140g of frozen peas to the frying pan at the end of step 4, heating them through for 3 minutes?
- To reduce the number of pans required, try cooking the leeks in with the pasta water and chopping cooked ham into the pasta mixture, instead of bacon.

Prepare now, eat later

- To prepare in advance, add another 100ml of the reserved cooking water at step 7 as the pasta will absorb more liquid when reheated. Cool at step 9 before grilling, cover and chill in the fridge for up to 24 hours. Then bake in a preheated oven at 180°C/160°C fan or gas mark 4 for 25–30 minutes or until hot and bubbling.

Skills used include:

Weighing, measuring, chopping, mixing/combining, blending, boiling/simmering, frying and grilling.

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