

# Baked Skillet Pasta with Cheddar and Spiced Onions

Good, but takes a while to prepare! Pay attention to notes.

## **Baked Skillet Pasta with Cheddar and Spiced Onions**

19 WW SmartPoint (Green), 2020, New York Times Cooking, Pasta, Velik Favorites

Cook Time: 1 hour Servings: 6 servings Source: [cooking.nytimes.com](http://cooking.nytimes.com)

### INGREDIENTS

6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

3 large onions, thinly sliced

1 large bay leaf

1  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons ground coriander

1 teaspoon ground cumin

Pinch of cayenne, plus more to taste

1  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoons fine sea salt, plus more as needed

3 fat garlic cloves, minced

1 teaspoon cumin seeds

1 teaspoon black pepper

$\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon ground allspice

1 (15-ounce) can whole peeled plum tomatoes

1 pound small pasta, such as rotini or shells

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup chopped parsley or cilantro (or use a combination of cilantro and parsley), plus more for serving

8 ounces shredded Cheddar

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup grated Parmesan

Hot sauce, for serving (optional)

### DESCRIPTION

In this warming skillet pasta bake, onions – sautéed with cumin, coriander and allspice until golden and aromatic – do double duty. They form the base of the tomato sauce that's

used to coat the pasta, and are mixed with grated Cheddar for the topping, where strands of onions mingle with the melted, gooey cheese. It's satisfying and easy, with the pasta baked in the same skillet as the sauce. Serve it as a meatless main course with a crisp salad alongside, or as a rich side to a lighter chicken or fish dish.

## DIRECTIONS

Heat 1/4 cup oil in a 12-inch skillet over high heat. Add onions and bay leaf, and cook, stirring frequently, until softened and browned in spots, 12 to 20 minutes. (Reduce heat if the pan starts to scorch.) Lower heat to medium, and stir in coriander, ground cumin, cayenne and 1/4 teaspoon salt; cook 1 more minute. Transfer half the onions to a bowl and reserve (leave the bay leaf in the skillet).

Add garlic, cumin seeds, pepper and allspice to the skillet, and stir. Cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Pour in the juice from the canned tomatoes. Use your hands or kitchen scissors to squish or cut the tomatoes into pieces and add to pan. Fill the empty tomato can with water, and pour into the skillet. Add remaining 2 tablespoons oil and remaining 1 teaspoon salt, and bring mixture to a simmer. Simmer until thickened, about 20 minutes. Taste, and add more salt and cayenne if you like. Remove bay leaf.

As mixture cooks, heat oven to 400 degrees and bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook pasta until just about 2 minutes shy of al dente. Reserve 1 cup pasta water, and drain pasta.

Stir pasta, reserved pasta water, and parsley into skillet with tomato sauce. Top with reserved browned onions, Cheddar and Parmesan. Transfer to oven and bake until golden and bubbly, 20 to 25 minutes. If you like, you can run the pan under the broil to brown the top, or leave it as is. Let cool slightly, top with more parsley, if desired, and serve with hot sauce, if you like.

## NOTES

To speed up caramelizing onions – put sliced onions on a plate covered with a paper towel in a microwave. Cook on high for 2 min. THEN put the onions in a cast iron skillet with heated oil. The onions will quickly cook now that most of the moisture is out. Keep turning the onions and you will soon see caramelization in half the time!

Used 28 oz can of crushed tomatoes (substituting the 14 oz can of tomatoes and 14 oz of water).

Prepared in cast iron enameled dutch oven.