Creamy Macaroni-and-Cheese Ham Bake

MAKES 4 servings

PREP 25 minutes

BAKE 30 minutes

1 7.25-ounce package macaroni and cheese dinner mix
1 1/2 cups cubed cooked ham or chopped cooked chicken
1 1/2 cups shredded cheddar cheese (6 ounces)
1 cup cream-style cottage cheese
1/2 cup sour cream
1/2 cup chopped onion
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/2 cup soft bread crumbs
1 tablespoon snipped fresh parsley or 1 teaspoon dried parsley flakes (optional)
1 tablespoon butter, melted

Directions
1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Prepare macaroni and cheese mix according to package directions, except do not add salt to water. Stir in ham, 1 cup of the cheddar cheese, the cottage cheese, sour cream, onion, and pepper. Transfer mixture to an ungreased 1 1/2-quart baking dish.
2. In a small bowl combine bread crumbs and, if desired, parsley; stir in melted butter. Sprinkle over macaroni mixture. Sprinkle with the remaining 1/2 cup cheddar cheese.
3. Bake, uncovered, about 30 minutes or until mixture is heated through and crumbs are golden. Makes 4 servings.

Chicken Noodle Soup

MAKES 4 servings

PREP 20 minutes

COOK 15 minutes

1/2 cup chicken broth
1 cup chopped onion (1 large)
1 cup sliced carrots (2 medium)
1 cup sliced celery (2 stalks)
1 teaspoon dried basil, crushed
1 teaspoon dried oregano, crushed
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 bay leaf
1 1/2 cups dried medium egg noodles
2 cups chopped cooked chicken or turkey

Directions
1. In a 3-quart saucepan combine broth, onion, carrots, celery, basil, oregano, pepper, and bay leaf. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Simmer, covered, for 5 minutes. Stir in uncooked noodles. Return to boiling; reduce heat. Simmer, covered, for 8 to 10 minutes or until noodles are tender but still firm and vegetables are just tender. Discard bay leaf. Stir in chicken; heat through. To serve, ladle soup into bowls. Makes 4 main-dish servings.

Chicken Tortellini Soup: Prepare as above, except substitute small broccoli florets for the celery and one 9-ounce package refrigerated cheese-filled tortellini for the noodles. Add the broccoli and 1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms when tortellini is added.
**Mini Meat Loaves with Green Beans**

**START TO FINISH** 
22 minutes

**MAKES** 4 servings

1 egg, lightly beaten
1 cup purchased pasta sauce
1/2 cup fine dry bread crumbs
1/4 cup fresh basil leaves, coarsely chopped if large
1 pound lean ground beef
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese (4 ounces)
1 12-ounce package fresh green beans, trimmed
1 tablespoon olive oil
Crushed red pepper (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 450°F. Bring a medium saucepan of salted water to boiling. In a large bowl combine egg, 1/2 cup of the pasta sauce, bread crumbs, 2 tablespoons of the basil, and 1/4 teaspoon salt. Add beef and 1/2 cup of the cheese; mix well. Divide beef mixture into four portions. Shape each portion into a 5 1/2x2-inch oval. Place on a 15x10x1-inch baking pan. Spoon on remaining pasta sauce and sprinkle with remaining cheese. Bake for 15 minutes or until internal temperature registers 160°F.

2. Meanwhile, cook green beans in boiling salted water for 10 minutes. Drain; toss with oil and, if desired, crushed red pepper. Serve with meat loaves. Sprinkle all with remaining basil leaves. Makes 4 servings.

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**Essential Chocolate Chip Cookies**

**PREP** 44 minutes

**BAKE** 8 minutes per batch

**MAKES** about 60 cookies

3 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
3 medium eggs
2 cups (4 ounces) semisweet chocolate pieces or miniature candy-coated semisweet chocolate pieces
1/2 cup whole milk
1/2 cup light corn syrup
1/2 cup unsalted butter
1 1/4 cups (2 sticks) softened butter
1 cup packed brown sugar
1/2 cup packed dark brown sugar
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
1/2 cup buttermilk
1/2 cup vegetable oil

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. In a large bowl beat butter and shortening with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add the brown sugar, granulated sugar, baking soda, and salt. Beat until mixture is combined. Beat in eggs and vanilla. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in remaining flour. Stir in chocolate pieces.

2. Drop dough by rounded teaspoons 2 inches apart onto an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake for 8 to 9 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool. Makes about 60 cookies.

**MACADAMIA NUT AND WHITE CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES:** Prepare as above, except substitute white baking pieces for the semisweet chocolate pieces. Stir in one 3 1/2-ounce jar macadamia nuts, chopped, with the baking pieces.

**CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIE BARS:** Prepare as above, except press dough into an ungreased 15x10x1-inch baking pan. Bake in a 375°F oven for 15 to 20 minutes or until golden. Cool on a wire rack. Cut into bars. Makes 48 bars.

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