

The Recipe: My Chicken Tetrazzini (for Today's Kitchen)

This recipe is a classic, and I know you will find ways to make it yours. Begin with chicken (or turkey) and either cook the chicken yourself or buy a supermarket rotisserie chicken and shred the meat. (My mother stewed a hen for Tetrazzini, which she said had more flavor, fyi.) Or go meatless and double the mushrooms. You can use store-bought or homemade chicken broth. Use vermicelli or spaghetti pasta, whatever you've got, and cook it by the package directions.

Flavor to suit your palate. Go bold and add a bit of cayenne. (Some of the old recipes called for a tablespoon of chili powder!) Add a pinch of nutmeg if you like. Use the sherry to pick up the sauce, but if you don't have sherry, add some white wine instead. Use the best mushrooms you can find - either white or cremini or Baby Bellas. Add the green olives or omit. But do take the time to toast some chopped pecans to scatter on top just when ready to serve. (I have found if you add the pecans ahead of time, before baking, some of the pecans will burn and the others get soggy sitting in the casserole and its juices.)

And as is the case with so many recipes, the better the Parmesan, the better the outcome. Shower the finished dish with chopped parsley or thyme, or leave it plain and simple in its comforting brownish, golden glory. It's going to be good!

Makes 8 to 10 servings

Prep: 30 minutes

Bake: 25 to 30 minutes

8 ounces thin spaghetti or vermicelli

Salt

3 cups (12 ounces) chopped or shredded cooked chicken

4 tablespoons butter

2 cups (8 ounces) sliced fresh mushrooms

1/2 cup chopped onion

1/2 cup chopped celery

3 tablespoons all-purpose flour

2 cups low-sodium chicken broth

1 cup heavy (whipping) cream

2 tablespoons sherry

Freshly ground black pepper

1 cup (4 ounces) grated Parmesan cheese, divided use

1/4 cup sliced green olives

1/4 cup (or more as desired) chopped toasted pecans, for garnish

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil over high heat. Break the spaghetti noodles in half. Stir in the spaghetti and 1 teaspoon salt. Reduce the heat to medium-high, and cook the spaghetti, uncovered, according to package directions until just done, 6 to 7 minutes. Drain the spaghetti well in a colander, shaking it to remove excess water. Place it in a mixing bowl, add the chicken, and toss to combine. Set aside.

2. Place a rack in the center of the oven, and preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

3. Place the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. When melted, add the mushrooms, onion, and celery and cook, stirring, until soft, 3 to 4 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium-low, and add the flour. Cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the chicken broth and cook, stirring, until it begins to thicken, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the cream, and stir until combined. Add the sherry, season with salt and pepper to taste, and cook stirring until the sauce comes just to a boil, about 2 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in 1/2 cup of the Parmesan and olives. Pour the sauce into the bowl with the chicken and noodles and stir to combine well.

4. Transfer the chicken mixture to a 13- by 9-inch or large round ceramic or glass casserole dish. Sprinkle with the remaining 1/2 cup Parmesan. Bake the casserole until it is bubbling, about 25 to 30 minutes. Remove from the oven, let it rest 10 minutes, then scatter with the toasted pecans and serve.

P.S. If you make it, I'd love to hear how it turned out!