Chicken and Pea Pasta Gratin

One 8-inch/20 cm square gratin, four meal portions · Active 30 min · Total 1 hr 15 min

Skills: Making a diluted evaporated-milk sauce and keeping a crumb-topped gratin moist

Ingredients

- 9 oz dry short pasta (250 g)
- About 10 cups water for pasta (2.5 L), or package-specified amount
- 1 1/2 cups frozen peas (210 g)
- 1 tablespoon neutral oil for sauce (15 ml)
- 2 1/2 tablespoons all-purpose flour (20 g)
- 3/4 cup unsweetened evaporated milk (180 ml)
- 3/4 cup water for sauce (180 ml)
- Canned cooked chicken, drained (7 oz/200 g)
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper (0.5 g)
- Plain crackers, coarsely crushed (2 oz/60 g)
- 1 tablespoon neutral oil for crumbs (15 ml)

Set out

8-inch/20 cm square baking dish, at least 2 qt/2 L, Large pasta saucepan and strainer, Medium saucepan and whisk, Small bowl for cracker crumbs, Food thermometer

Allergens

wheat, milk. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Heat oven to 400°F/200°C. Cook pasta in boiling water according to its package until just tender. Add peas only for their own complete packet cooking time, usually the final 3–5 minutes, or cook separately if their packet requires. Drain well.

2. Meanwhile heat sauce oil in the medium saucepan over medium-low heat. Stir flour in for 1 minute. Whisk in evaporated milk and the separate 180 ml sauce water gradually. Bring to gentle bubbling and cook for 3–4 minutes, stirring, until lightly thickened.

3. Fold chicken, pepper, cooked pasta and peas into the sauce. Spread in the baking dish. Mix crushed crackers with their 1 tablespoon oil and scatter over the top.

4. Bake for 20–25 minutes until the crumb surface is golden and the center reaches 165°F/74°C. Rest for 5 minutes and spoon into four portions.

A small amount of canned milk

Measure 180 ml evaporated milk, not a whole large can by habit. The rest can be refrigerated promptly for another recipe within its label guidance.

Ingredient labels

Pasta, flour and most plain crackers contain wheat; evaporated milk contains milk. Crackers or pasta may add soy, sesame or egg, so check actual labels.

A useful detail

Boiling pasta and making sauce overlap. Use a dish with stated capacity; do not crowd a smaller shallow pan and assume the center heats at the same speed.

Keep it well

Refrigerate shallow portions within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C, at 40°F/4°C or below and use within 3 days. Reheat a portion to 165°F/74°C throughout. Freeze promptly cooled portions for up to 1 month, thaw in the refrigerator and reheat covered until hot throughout. The cracker top softens during storage.