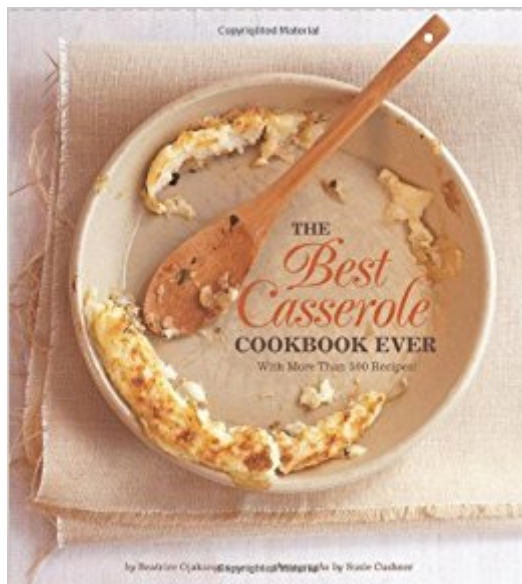


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# The Best Casserole Cookbook Ever



## Synopsis

A good cook once said that a casserole is a blend of inspiration and what's on hand. Beatrice Ojakangas must have had inspiration by the gallon to come up with these 500 casseroles. From a breakfast of Eggs Florentine to a dinner of Pork Chops with Apple Stuffing, soon even the most casserole-wary cook will be dishing about these delights. Yummy treats like Parmesan and Sun-Dried Tomato Quiche and Strawberry Rhubarb Crisp are just right for parties. Even appetizers are reinvented in casserole form! The Best Casserole Cookbook Ever will inspire comforting dishes and innovative feasts for any meal of the day no matter what's in the fridge.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Beatrice Ojakangas has written over 20 cookbooks. She teaches cooking classes in her home near Duluth, Minnesota. Susie Cushner is a Boston-based photographer.

The cookbook provides you with many simple, tasty dishes that can be prepared in 20 minutes or less, are easy to transport, even if you will be going on a lengthy road trip, and that can be slid into the oven once you arrive at your destination. The recipes range from casseroles for two, casseroles for crowds, casseroles for breakfast (scrumptious) and there's even a small section devoted to casseroles for kids, though my seven-year-old likes most of the recipes that we have tried from this book. Ojakangas refrains from using pre-made soups to flavor her casseroles, preferring to provide you with her own cream of mushroom soup, etc., making for meals that contain less sodium. And, though most casseroles seem to demand vast quantities of butter or cream, she does have a

suitable number of recipes that have no dairy products. Some dishes take 30 minutes to cook, while others can be left virtually unattended for three-four hours. During this time, the scent of your meal sweeps through the house, curling up the stairs and into rooms, so that when the meal is ready--and you've done a dozen other things, like curl up with a book--everyone sits at the table with a hearty appetite. Oh, I do love those moments!! I am sharing her "Mac and Cheese to Beat the Box" recipe, found on page 572. This easy to make dish is the first macaroni and cheese recipe that I have ever found that my seven-year-old feels rivals Kraft's version. Essentially, when this recipe proved a hit, I went crazy with the book and have made about 20 of the author's recipes. Some I have never returned to, and others I have revamped to better suit the palates of my family--that's another nice feature: these recipes are easy to use as your base."

**Mac and Cheese to Beat the Box**"Serves 4

**Ingredients:** 2 cups whole-wheat or regular elbow macaroni (or, in a pinch, penne, farfalle, or cavatelli) 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese (mild, medium, or sharp) 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese or Neufchatel cheese, cubed 1 cup undiluted evaporated milk 1/2 cup fine dry breadcrumbs 2 tablespoons butter, melted 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese

**Directions:** 1) Preheat the oven to 400F. 2) Cook the macaroni in boiling salted water according to package directions. Drain, but do not rinse. 3) Combine the macaroni with the Cheddar and cream cheese in a shallow 1-quart casserole. Stir until the cream cheese melts into the hot macaroni. Stir in the milk and scrape down the sides of the dish. 4) In a small bowl, mix the breadcrumbs with the melted butter and grated Parmesan cheese. Sprinkle evenly over the macaroni and cheese. Bake for 30-35 minutes, or until the breadcrumbs are browned.

**My slight variations:** I have made this dish in different ways, and have found that my daughter is put off by the Neufchatel, and prefers the taste of Philadelphia Cream Cheese to any of the other brands. I do not use the evaporated milk, but substitute it with a cup of whole cream. I use Panko bread crumbs (not fine)--we prefer the crustier form of breadcrumb for this dish (or make your own). I combine various cheddar cheeses and actually use more than what is recommended. Broccoli and/or cauliflower can easily be added to this dish, as can various porks: sausages, diced ham, etc.

This is the cookbook I use most for casseroles. She has it organized according to size, purpose and ingredients. Very nice!

**ps:** As a senior, I use the section on small casseroles for two. It's only one of two books that I know of that has cut the amounts of the ingredients for small dishes.

I have yet to cook anything from this book, but I just had to post about how ecstatic I was to discover that this cookbook teaches me how to make the sauces for all of the casseroles instead of just

relying on the store bought can of "Cream of...Soup". For each recipe, the author refers you to both her homemade sauce AND gives you the equivalent in store bought cans so no matter if you are a crazy perfectionist or short on time, you can enjoy every recipe. I also loved the quick "mix and match" casserole section at the beginning of the book where the author gives you a starting point for making your own casseroles with your family's favorites or with whatever you happen to have laying around in the kitchen.

This is a superb cookbook. Beatrice O really knows her way around a casserole! This has produced the all time best scalloped potatoes, pot roast and lasagne ever. I did not grow up in a casserole-oriented household and never learned this style of economic, time-efficient cooking and I just love this book. She has easy recipes for replacing all those condensed canned soups with genuine sauces. This style of cooking is a total boon for time-pressed cooks who are looking for healthy, nutritious options. I will say she has a definite fondness for cheese, but these are choices that can be modified. The principles are excellent and my friends tell me I am a good cook already, but this has made my cooking even better.

Regarding the print...I read reviews from people who had trouble with the color of the print, which was called orange and gray in some reviews. I thought that I had purchased a different version since I had no difficulty in reading the print. However, on closer examination, I found that the print in my copy is arguably orange and gray--tho more rust and charcoal. Regarding the recipes, they are mouthwatering! I cook a lot, and have an extensive cookbook collection, mostly of gourmet cookbooks. The recipes in the book may not rise to the level of haute cuisine, however, I think that they will produce family and friend meals closer to the gourmet end of the spectrum than the normal casserole or comfort food cookbook. I was extremely pleased by my purchase!

Finally, a cook book written by someone who has either been trained as a chef/cooking institute or is naturally talented. Great for those who like cooking with canned cream-of-yuck soups and even better for those of us who don't! It's nice she gave everyone that choice. She actually teaches you a few basic culinary mother sauces without telling you that's what she's up to. She's also teaching you basic and properly ordered cooking techniques. Nice twist. She also teaches you ratios if you want to create your own casseroles. VERY VERY NICE! The "Poor Man's Lobster" recipe was worth the price of the book alone, but the treasure of ratios by ingredient is priceless. I can always spot someone who doesn't know how to cook, there are thousands of them writing cookbooks! It's nice

to come across a book that I don't have to tear the recipe down into proper procedures before I can even start to understand what the writer is trying to accomplish. Thanks a million, Beatrice. You rock!

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