

Air Fryer Pasta Bake

The 27-minute no-boil weeknight dinner. One vessel. Pantry ingredients.

ACTIVE TIME
8 min

TOTAL TIME
27 min

SERVINGS
3-4

SKILL
Easy

TEMP
320°F

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups dry pasta (penne, rigatoni, or small shells)
- 2 cups jarred marinara sauce
- 1/2 cup water or chicken broth
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella, divided
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning
- Salt and black pepper, to taste

Optional add-ins: frozen spinach (thawed, squeezed), canned white beans, cherry tomatoes, or sliced zucchini.

GROCERY LIST (BY AISLE)

PANTRY

- Dry pasta (penne/rigatoni/shells)
- Jarred marinara sauce
- Garlic powder
- Italian seasoning
- Salt, black pepper

DAIRY

- Shredded mozzarella
- Grated Parmesan

PRODUCE (optional)

- Fresh basil
- Cherry tomatoes
- Zucchini

FROZEN (optional)

- Frozen spinach

PROTEIN (optional)

- Canned white beans
- Ground beef or sausage

METHOD

1. Preheat air fryer to 320°F for 3 minutes.
2. In a 6- or 7-inch oven-safe dish, combine pasta, marinara, water/broth, garlic powder, Italian seasoning, half the mozzarella, salt, and pepper. Stir to coat.
3. Add any optional vegetables or beans now.
4. Cover tightly with foil. Press edges down so no steam escapes.
5. Cook at 320°F for 20–22 minutes.
6. Uncover. Pierce a piece with a fork. It should be tender. If firm, re-cover 3 more minutes.
7. Top with remaining mozzarella and Parmesan. Return uncovered at 320°F for 3–5 minutes until bubbly and browned at edges.
8. Rest 2 minutes. Finish with fresh basil or a drizzle of olive oil.

3 MOST COMMON FIXES

Sauce too thick?

Add 3–4 tablespoons of water before baking. Thick sauces don't produce enough steam to cook the pasta through.

Foil loose?

Press edges down firmly around the rim. Any steam escape leaves the top layer of pasta dry and crunchy.

Wrong pasta shape?

Stick to penne, rigatoni, or small shells. Strand pasta (spaghetti, angel hair) clumps and cooks unevenly with this method.

QUICK SWAPS

Dairy-free: Swap cheese for dairy-free shreds (cashew or coconut-oil base). Add 2 Tbsp olive oil.

Gluten-free: Use GF pasta. Check at 18 min. Add 3 extra Tbsp water at start.

Add protein: Brown ground beef or sausage first, drain fat, stir in at step 2.

Lower carb: Replace half the pasta with sliced zucchini or mushrooms.

NOTES