

McCLINTOCK'S COOKERY

with MK McClintock

TUNA, VEGGIE, AND WALNUT CASSEROLE

It can't always be about gooey chocolatey goodness.

For this casserole dish, use healthy ingredients and whole-wheat pasta, and you'll have a nice family-fun meal that won't stretch the waistline (Unless you can't resist and take heaping portions like I did the first time I made this). This dish goes great with a small spinach or baby greens salad. Since this is a pasta dish, I recommend leaving bread off the menu.

What you really need to ask yourself is do you want an easy-to-prepare meal that tastes great right from the oven, freezes well, and chances are the kids will like it too? This casserole is just that - not a great deal of effort but a lot of goodness goes into this dish. The idea came from a tuna casserole recipe from *Cooking Light*; however, I changed things up a bit (well, quite a bit) as I prefer a few more veggies and other goodies they just didn't include. Now, this is still a pretty healthy recipe - the additional calories from the walnuts are worth the nutritional value you'll get, and the walnuts give it a surprisingly nice crunch. As a bonus, it's a great way to get your kids (young and old) to eat their veggies. Give it a try and let me know what you think!



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Tuna, Veggie, and Walnut Casserole

Recipe by: MK

Yield: 10 servings

- 13.25 oz whole wheat Rotini pasta
 - 2 Tbs extra virgin olive oil
 - 3/4 cup chopped yellow onion
 - 12 oz bag frozen veggie mix (*corn, carrots, peas and green beans*)
 - 2 green onions, chopped
 - 2 Tbs all-purpose flour
 - 3 cups fat-free milk (*add up to 1/2 cup more if you prefer a 'soupier' casserole*)
 - 1/2 cup + 1oz (5 oz) 1/3 less fat cream cheese, softened
 - 2 Tbs Dijon mustard (the brand I used has horseradish)
 - 1/2 tsp sea salt
 - 1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper
 - 1/2 cup (2 oz) fresh and grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, divided
 - 3 cans regular tuna
 - 1 1/4 cups chopped walnuts
 - Cooking spray
1. Preheat broiler on low setting.
 2. Cook noodles according to package directions (omitting the salt and fat).
 3. Heat a fairly large skillet over medium heat; add the olive oil.
 4. Add onions and veggies; cook approx 6 minutes or until onions begin to tenderize.
 5. Sprinkle with flour; cook 1 minute stirring constantly.
 6. Slowly add milk; cook 5 minutes stirring constantly until slightly thick.
 7. Stir in cream cheese, mustard, salt and pepper; cook 2 minutes. Stir in tuna and walnuts.
 8. Remove pan from heat; stir in noodles and 1/4 cup of the Parm cheese.
 9. Spray 4 quart oven-safe baking dish with cooking spray; spoon casserole mixture into dish and sprinkle remaining 1/4 cup Parm cheese over the top.
 10. Broil 5 minutes or until golden brown and bubbly.
 11. Let stand five minutes before serving.

