

Easy Chicken Parmesan Bake from Cleo Coyle

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This is a popular family-style casserole, one that gives your taste buds all the flavors of a traditional chicken parm without the added fat and calories of breading and frying. Many home cooks have some version of this baby in their recipe folders. This is my version. I hope you enjoy it. ~ Cleo



Ingredients:

- 5-ounce package of garlic croutons
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic (minced)
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 pounds chicken tenders (or breasts cut into strips)
- 5-6 fresh basil leaves (chiffonade)
- 2 cups of tomato sauce (jarred or a favorite recipe)
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup grated parmesan cheese
- Salt and ground black pepper (*a light sprinkling*)

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Step 1 - Prep oven and croutons: Preheat your oven to 350° F. Place garlic croutons in a plastic bag and beat with a meat hammer or heavy object until they've been crushed into smaller pieces. Do not beat these babies into tiny breadcrumbs. But do break down any large, chunky pieces into smaller bits. Set aside.

Step 2 - Toss chicken with oil and spices: In a 9 x 13-inch glass baking dish, drizzle the olive oil. Add the chicken tenders, garlic, oregano, salt, and pepper, and stir well to coat the chicken pieces with the oil and spices. Spread the fresh basil on top of the chicken.



Step 3 - Add sauce and pre-bake: Pour the tomato sauce on top of the chicken, distributing evenly. Slide into a pre-heated 350° F. oven for 30 minutes. Remove. Do not turn off oven!



Step 4 – Add layers of cheese, croutons & cheese: Spread half of the mozzarella and parmesan evenly over the sauce. Next sprinkle all of the crushed croutons onto the sauce. Finish with a sprinkling of the remainder of the two cheeses.

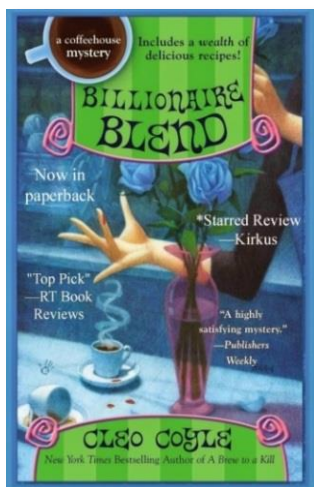
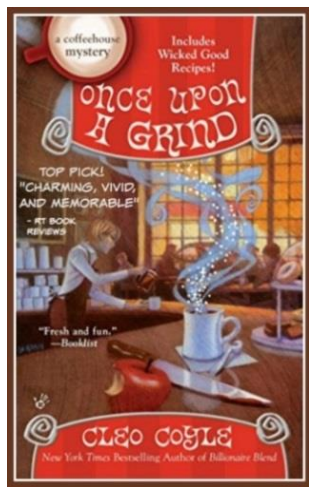
Step 5 – Final bake: Return the pan to your 350 degree F. oven for another 25 to 30 minutes. Casserole is done when all of the cheese is well melted. Remove pan from oven and allow to cool for a few minutes before cutting into squares or spooning onto plates.

Re-heating: This dish makes amazingly tasty leftovers. For the very best result, before reheating, add a bit more sauce and cheese on top. Place in a small casserole dish, cover with a lid or aluminum foil, and reheat in a 350° F. oven for 20 minutes. Or simply place in a microwave-safe dish and zap uncovered until warmed through.



Eat with joy! ~ Cleo Coyle

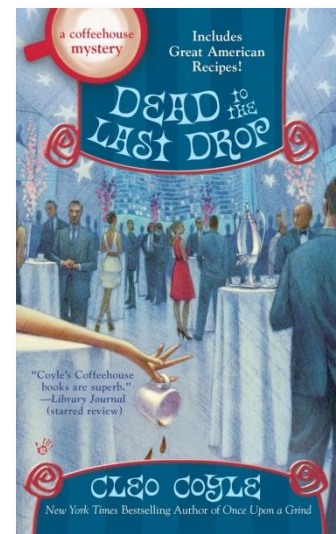
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