BACON RANCH CHICKEN CASSEROLE
Gluten Free • Dairy Free • Delicious

This family favorite is casserole at its finest. Creamy on the inside, crispy on the outside, and all around oh-so-comforting. Use whatever pasta you like best (brown rice noodles work great, but we like using chickpea penne. You could even use regular wheat-based penne here if desired).

Ingredients

- 12 oz. chickpea penne
- 3 cups pre-cooked chicken
- 8 ounces thick cut bacon
- 1 - 15 oz. can full fat coconut milk
- 1 cup pasta water
- 1/4 cup nutritional yeast
- 1/4 cup dry onion flakes
- 1/4 cup dry parsley
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt (or more, to taste)
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- 2 teaspoons white vinegar
- 1 Tablespoon potato starch (or cornstarch) mixed with 2 Tablespoons cold water
- 1 cup seasoned rice crumbs (see recipe below)
- Cooking spray

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 375 ° F.
2. Grease a 9" x 13" glass baking dish.
3. Make the seasoned rice crumbs and set aside.
4. Cook the bacon: slice into 1/2" pieces and cook in a frying pan on medium heat until crispy. Remove from heat and drain excess fat. Set aside.
5. Cook the penne according to package directions. Drain and reserve 1 cup pasta water. Set both aside.
6. Make the sauce: whisk together coconut milk, reserved pasta water, 1/4 cup nutritional yeast, seasonings and vinegar. When the sauce comes to a simmer, add the starch slurry and whisk until thickens (this will happen fast!). Remove from heat.
7. In a large mixing bowl, gently combine cooked penne, chicken, bacon and sauce. Pour into greased baking dish and top with seasoned rice crumbs. Spray with cooking oil (or drizzle some olive oil on top).
8. Bake uncovered for 30 minutes, then serve.

Seasoned Rice Crumbs:

Combine in a food processor: 1 cup gluten free crispy rice cereal (*note: Kellog's brand is NOT gluten free),
1 1/2 teaspoons dry parsley, 1 1/2 teaspoons onion powder, 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder, and 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt.
Process on high until the consistency of traditional breadcrumbs.