



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

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SCFCL website: <http://www.scfcl.com>

Leader Training Guide

Casseroles

Objectives:

- What is a casserole?
- How to Incorporate the five food groups into a casserole.
- Safely store leftover casseroles, or prepare ahead and freeze them.

Lesson Overview/Introduction:

Casseroles are an easy and quick way to make a well-rounded, nutritious meal. Casseroles can incorporate all five food groups, are easy to make ahead of time, and often result in leftovers. For busy families, people who live alone or cook for themselves and a spouse/partner, casseroles save time and money and pack a nutritious punch. In this lesson, learners will discuss what a casserole is, how to make healthy casseroles and how to store them safely.

Lesson:

- What is a casserole?
 - A casserole is a one-pan dish that is baked and served out of a sturdy baking dish (Food Network: <https://www.foodnetwork.com/how-to/packages/food-network-essentials/what-is-a-casserole>)
 - Casseroles are found in many food cultures. However, they have a very American feel and are often associated with comfort food.
 - Casseroles can be standalone main dishes or side dishes, and they are often brought to potlucks and holiday meals or dropped off when families have a baby or are grieving the loss of a family member.
- Incorporating the five food groups into your healthy casserole:
 - What are the five food groups, and why are they important?
 - The five food groups are fruits, vegetables, dairy, grain, and protein. These food groups come from MyPlate, and a graphic can be found at: <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/what-is-myplate>
 - It is essential to include food from each category because our bodies need nutrients from each category in order to stay healthy and thrive.
 - Fruit: Most savory casserole recipes do not include fruit. This is okay. You can serve fruit as a side or dessert when you make a delicious casserole.
 - Vegetables: Most casserole recipes call for some veggies. Vegetables are low in fat and calories and have good fiber, folate, vitamins A and C, and potassium levels.
 - Some casserole dishes are loaded with vegetables and make great side dishes.
 - Dairy: Dairy is an excellent source of calcium, potassium, Vitamin D, and many other nutrients. Dairy can be added to casseroles as milk, yogurt, butter, or cream. It is important to consider portion sizes when choosing a casserole recipe containing a high-fat form of dairy (butter or cream).

- Grains: Focusing on making half of your grains whole grains. Some benefits of whole grains include dietary fiber, B vitamins, and minerals. Casserole recipes may call for a grain that isn't whole, but substituting whole grain products is easy. If a recipe calls for pasta, grab whole-grain pasta. If it calls for white rice, you can easily substitute brown rice.
 - Protein: Protein is the building block for nearly every part of the human body. Protein from food helps the body build muscle, bone, skin, hair and many other tissues. We also need protein for chemical reactions that power our bodies. Protein can be found in various foods: meat, fish, beans, grains, eggs, nuts, soy, dairy, and vegetables. If you want a casserole to be a main or stand-alone dish, including a good source of protein in the recipe is vital.
- Properly Storing Your Leftover Casserole:
 - It is essential to store all leftovers properly to reduce the chances of food-borne illness. Most storage guidelines can be applied to all foods, but we will be using these techniques for casseroles for this lesson.
 - We want to keep food out of the “Danger Zone.” The Danger Zone is where bacteria and other pathogens can multiply. This temperature zone is between 40 and 140 degrees Fahrenheit. The best ways to keep food out of danger zones are refrigerating, freezing, or cooking.
 - The CDC uses “Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill” to sum up how to practice food safety in the kitchen. This saying can easily be applied to preparing casseroles.
 - Clean: Make sure to wash your hands and clean all surfaces in the kitchen that may come into contact with your food.
 - DO NOT wash meats or poultry. Contrary to popular belief, this can spread dangerous bacteria in your kitchen. The best way to destroy any bacteria on your meat or poultry is to cook it to a safe temperature.
 - Separate: It is essential to separate your ready-to-eat and cooked foods from your raw meat, poultry, and fish while shopping, preparing, and storing foods. Once everything has been added to your casserole and cooked to the proper temperature, it is safe to store.
 - Cook: The safe internal temperature for casseroles is 165 degrees Fahrenheit. This is for meatless and meat casseroles.
 - Chill: It is vital to thaw any frozen ingredients properly if the recipe calls for thawed ingredients. Some casserole recipes allow for the addition of frozen vegetables, and this is fine. If you are thawing meat or poultry, it is essential to thaw in the refrigerator or microwave.
 - Never thaw foods on the kitchen counter or in the sink at room temperature: doing so leaves the food in the temperature danger zone for too long and can encourage the rapid growth of dangerous bacteria.
 - Once a casserole dish is out of the oven, you want to chill it rapidly to avoid bacteria growth. You can place it directly into the refrigerator to ensure that it is wrapped tightly or that an airtight lid is placed on the casserole dish.
 - You can store a leftover casserole in the fridge for 3-4 days or 3-4 months in the freezer.
 - You can thaw a frozen casserole in the fridge, put it directly in the oven, and cook to a safe temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit.

- You can also make casseroles and freeze them until you are ready to eat them. This is great if you are pregnant and want to prepare meals for your immediate post-partum period. Follow the recipe instructions and place the cooked casserole in the freezer. You can put it in the preheated oven and cook it to a temperature when ready to eat it.

Lesson Summary: This lesson talks about what a casserole is and how to incorporate the five food groups into a casserole or meal with a casserole. This lesson also talks about general safe food handling and how they can be explicitly applied to casseroles.

Suggested Activities:

Temperature Danger Zone demonstration (From EFNEP Curriculum “Eating Smart, Being Active” lesson 6): Place ten craft pompoms into a ziplock bag and 80 into another ziplock bag. Show each bag to the participants. The pompoms are bacteria, and the bag with 10 is what we are starting with. Now, we imagine the bag being left in the temperature danger zone (40 degrees to 140 degrees) for 1 hour. After 1 hour in the temperature danger zone, those ten bacteria will multiply to 80.

Recipe Search: If participants have laptops, tablets, or phones, they can do an online recipe search. Ask participants to search for a main dish casserole recipe that includes no less than 3 out of the five food groups. MyPlate.gov is an excellent resource for healthy casserole recipes and cost effective:

https://www.myplate.gov/myplate-kitchen/recipes?search=casserole&items_per_page=20&sort_bef_combine=title_ASC .

Give participants time to discuss why they think a recipe is healthy and why it qualifies as a main dish instead of a side dish. (A main dish incorporates more food groups and isn’t a dessert.)

Suggested Materials:

-Two ziplock baggies

-90 craft pom poms

-Any visuals of casseroles (you can find recipes and pictures at: https://www.myplate.gov/myplate-kitchen/recipes?search=casserole&items_per_page=20&sort_bef_combine=title_ASC)

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Sources/References:

<https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/what-is-myplate>

<https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/what-should-you-eat/protein/>

<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/leftovers-and-food-safety>

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts/safe-minimum-internal-temperatures>

<https://www.cdc.gov/food-safety/prevention/index.html>

[https://www.myplate.gov/myplate-](https://www.myplate.gov/myplate-kitchen/recipes?search=casserole&items_per_page=20&sort_bef_combine=title_ASC)

[kitchen/recipes?search=casserole&items_per_page=20&sort_bef_combine=title_ASC](https://www.myplate.gov/myplate-kitchen/recipes?search=casserole&items_per_page=20&sort_bef_combine=title_ASC)

Baker, S. S., & McGirr, K. (n.d.). *Eating Smart, Being Active*. Fort Collins: Colorado State University.

-A printout of the safe cooking temperatures chart from [foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov):

[FoodSafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov)

Safe Minimum Internal Temperature Chart for Cooking

Food	Type	Internal Temperature (°F/°C)
Beef, bison, veal, goat, and lamb	Steaks, roasts, chops	145°F (63°C) Rest time: 3 minutes
	Ground meat and sausage	160°F (71°C)
Casseroles	Meat and meatless	165°F (74°C)
Chicken, turkey, and other poultry	All: whole bird, breasts, legs, thighs, wings, ground poultry, giblets, sausage, and stuffing inside poultry	165°F (74°C)
Eggs	Raw eggs	Cook until yolk and white are firm
	Egg dishes (such as frittata, quiche)	160°F (71°C)
	Casseroles (containing meat and poultry)	165°F (74°C)
Ham	Raw ham	145°F (63°C) Rest time: 3 minutes
	Precooked ham (to reheat)	165°F (74°C) Note: Reheat cooked hams packaged in USDA-inspected plants to 140°F (60°C)
Leftovers	Any type	165°F (74°C)
Pork	Steaks, roasts, chops	145°F (63°C) Rest time: 3 minutes
	Ground meat and sausage	160°F (71°C)
Rabbit and venison	Wild or farm-raised	160°F (71°C)
Seafood	Fish (whole or filet), such as salmon, tuna, tilapia, pollock, bass, cod, catfish, trout, etc.	145°F (63°C) or cook until flesh is no longer translucent and separates easily with a fork
	Shrimp, lobster, crab, and scallops	Cook until flesh is pearly or white, and opaque
	Clams, oysters, mussels	Cook until shells open during cooking