

Bacon, Cheddar and Spinach Strata

Recipe By: Chef John

"Even with just one layer of filling in the middle of this strata, you'll be looking at a gorgeous casserole which should thoroughly impress your brunch guests with bottomless Mimosas."

Ingredients (*get creative and add your own inspired layers*)

- 1/2++ pounds (8-10 slices) **bacon** - *cut crosswise into 1/2" wide strips (add sausage maybe)*
- 1/2++ tablespoons bacon **grease**
- 1/2 loaf (1/2 pound) day-old sourdough/French **bread** (*boxed stuffing?*)- *cut into 1/2" cubes*
- 6 large **eggs**
- 1/2 teaspoon or less kosher salt (*or use feta cheese and no salt as the middle cheese layer*)
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black **pepper** (and 1/4 teaspoon fresh thyme)
- 1 pinch **cayenne** pepper
- 1 pinch freshly grated **nutmeg**
- 1 1/4 cups **heavy cream** (*or use 1 cup milk & 1/2 stick butter melted*)
- 1/2++ pound **spinach** - *wilted & dried using bacon pan (dump in some garlic & onions & salsa)*
- 7 Cremini **mushrooms** - *sautéed with 2 cloves of garlic & onions dump in salsa and reduce*
- 6 ounces (*or more*) shredded extra-sharp Cheddar (*or whatever other cheeses*)
- 4-5 tablespoons of **salsa**

Directions

1. If necessary bake bread cubes @ 350° for 10 minutes or so until dried then place **bread** cubes in a large mixing bowl.
2. **Wisk together** cream and salt, pepper, thyme, cayenne, and nutmeg then add **eggs**.
3. Pour egg/cream mixture over the **bread cubes and mix** to distribute ingredients evenly.
4. Allow bread mixture to **sit from at least 1 hour up to overnight in refrigerator**.
5. Sauté **mushrooms, etc.** (heat olive oil & butter - wait until bubbling almost stops then sauté until oil returns from mushrooms to the pan)
6. Fry **bacon** in mushroom pan until crisp (bubbles in grease) then **drain** and save the fat.
7. Use bacon pan to **wilt spinach**. Hand-squeeze out as much liquid as possible then chop.
8. Well oil bottom and sides of a **9"x9" baking dish** with saved **bacon fat**.
9. Spread **1/2 bread cube mix** evenly over the bottom of pan & press mixture down - then:
 - Cover with half of the grated Cheddar **cheese**.
 - Add cooked **bacon** pieces in an even layer over the cheese.
 - Next add sautéed **mushrooms** pieces in an even layer over the bacon.
 - Place the cooked **spinach** over the bacon and cover with **salsa**.
 - Cover with **half of the remaining cheese** (*and/or use feta cheese*).
 - Finish with the rest of the **bread cube mix**, spread evenly & pressed down slightly.
 - Sprinkle with the rest of the grated **cheese**.
10. Preheat oven to **350°** and bake until set, about **45 minutes**.
11. **Broil** the strata for a minute or two to brown the top.