

— AMERICA'S —
TEST KITCHEN

Make-Ahead Breakfast Casserole

YIELD Serves 8 to 10

TIME 2¼ hours, plus 1 hour refrigerating

Why This Recipe Works

Even when staled in the oven overnight, the white bread in our Make-Ahead Breakfast Casserole soaked up too much custard and turned to mush. Using toasted Italian bread greatly improved the texture. Substituting whole milk for half-and-half or cream kept the casserole light and fluffy, while keeping the amount minimal ensured the dish remained firm. We used enough cheese and sausage to flavor the dish, but not so much that we were left with a greasy, soggy mess. Extra-sharp cheddar cheese helped make up for flavor lost from using less sausage. Some Make-Ahead Breakfast Casserole recipes we tasted contained pockets where certain ingredients tended to congregate. To solve this, we staggered the bread, sausage, and cheese mixtures in multiple layers. Building the casserole with care helped ensure every bite had flavor.



Gather Your Ingredients

- 1 (14-inch) loaf Italian bread (see note), ends trimmed

Before You Begin

- * You can find unsliced loaves of Italian bread in the bakery section of your supermarket. Frank's RedHot is the test kitchen's top-rated hot sauce. If using a spicier sauce such as Tabasco, reduce amount to 1½ teaspoons.

- ☐ **1** pound bulk pork sausage
- ☐ **1** small onion, chopped fine
- ☐ **3** cups shredded extra-sharp cheddar cheese
- ☐ **12** large eggs, lightly beaten
- ☐ **4** cups whole milk
- ☐ **1 ½** teaspoons salt
- ☐ **1** teaspoon pepper
- ☐ **1** tablespoon hot sauce (see note)

Instructions

- 1. TOAST BREAD** Adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions and heat oven to 400 degrees. Slice bread in half lengthwise, then slice each half crosswise into ½-inch-thick pieces. Spread bread in single layers on 2 rimmed baking sheets and bake until golden, 15 to 20 minutes, flipping bread and switching and rotating sheets halfway through. Let cool 15 minutes.
- 2. BROWN SAUSAGE** Cook sausage in large skillet over medium heat until no longer pink, about 5 minutes. Add onion and cook until golden, about 5 minutes.
- 3. ASSEMBLE CASSEROLE** Grease 13- by 9-inch baking dish. Shingle half of bread in prepared pan so that edges overlap slightly. Top with half of sausage mixture and 1 cup cheese. Repeat with remaining bread, remaining sausage mixture, and remaining cheese.
- 4. SOAK AND WEIGHT** Whisk eggs, milk, salt, pepper, and hot sauce in large bowl. Pour evenly over casserole. Wrap casserole with plastic and weight according to photos below. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour and up to 24 hrs.
- 5. BAKE CASSEROLE** Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Let casserole stand at room temperature while oven is heating. Remove weights, unwrap casserole, and bake until the edges and center have puffed and top is golden brown, about 1 hour. Let cool 10 minutes. Serve.