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Tarragon Chicken Bake

Serves 6

This mouthwatering rendition of an old favorite is a bit of France, with a zing from Dijon mustard and a delightful crispy crumb coating on top. Terrific for a quick holiday or company dinner it can be made weeks in advance, then defrosted and baked to be ready when you are. I love to bake this with egg noodles on the bottom, so that all I have to do for my party is toss the salad and heat up the casserole.

1 pound wide egg noodles, cooked according to package directions
1/4 cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter
1/4 cup olive oil
6 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 cup finely chopped shallot or onion
1 pound cremini or white mushrooms, thinly sliced
1/4 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
2-1/2 cups chicken broth
1/4 cup Dijon mustard
1 cup heavy cream
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh tarragon

Crumb Topping:

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh tarragon
1-1/2 cups fresh breadcrumbs
2 tablespoons pure olive oil
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

Make It Now:

1. Coat the inside of a 9 x 13-inch baking dish with nonstick cooking spray. Spread the noodles in an even layer in the bottom of the dish.
2. Melt 1 tablespoon of the butter with the oil in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Sprinkle the chicken with salt and pepper. Add the chicken and sauté for 3 minutes on each side, until golden and almost cooked through. Remove to a plate to cool.
3. Melt the remaining 3 tablespoons butter in the sauté pan, add the garlic and shallot, and sauté for 3 minutes, until softened. Add the mushrooms and sauté until they begin to color, 7 to 9 minutes. Sprinkle the mushrooms with flour and cook for 3 minutes.



Tarragon Chicken Bake (continued)

4. Slowly add the chicken broth, scraping up any bits that may be stuck to the bottom of the pan, and bring the sauce to a boil. Add the mustard, cream, and tarragon, and simmer for 5 minutes. Let the sauce cool.
5. Arrange the chicken over the noodles in the prepared pan and pour the sauce over all. Cover and refrigerate for up to 2 days or freeze for up to 6 weeks.

Bake It Later:

1. Defrost the casserole in the refrigerator overnight, if necessary.
2. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Allow the casserole to come to room temperature for about 30 minutes.
3. In a small bowl, combine the tarragon, breadcrumbs, oil, and mustard and mix until the crumbs are evenly moistened. Spread over the chicken in the casserole dish and bake for 35 to 40 minutes, until the topping is golden brown and the sauce is bubbling. Serve immediately.