

# Southern Beef and Noodle Casserole

Serves 6

**Note:** A Morris family favorite, this casserole also is a great gift for friends with a new baby in the house.

6 ounces dried egg noodles  
 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided  
 2 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour  
 2 cups milk  
 Salt  
 Ground white pepper  
 1 cup finely chopped yellow onion  
 ¾ cup finely chopped red or green sweet pepper  
 1 tablespoon minced or pressed garlic  
 1½ pounds ground round or

other lean tender beef  
 ½ pounds fresh mushrooms, finely chopped  
 3 tablespoons top-quality chili powder  
 Freshly ground black pepper  
 Ground cayenne pepper  
 2 cups homemade tomato sauce, or a 15-ounce can tomato sauce  
 2 cups homemade creamed corn, or a 17-ounce can cream-style corn  
 1 cup freshly grated cheddar cheese

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large pot, bring 2 quarts water to a boil over high heat. Add the noodles and cook until al dente, about 12 minutes. Drain and rinse in cold water to halt cooking and help keep the strands separated. Reserve.

2. Melt 2 tablespoons butter in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the flour, blend well, and cook, stirring, until bubbly, about 1 minute. Slowly whisk in the milk. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium and cook, stirring constantly, until thickened, about 5 to 6 minutes. Remove from heat, and season the white sauce to taste with salt and white pepper.

3. Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons butter in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion and sweet pepper and saute until soft, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and saute 1 minute longer. Stir in the ground beef and mushrooms and saute just until the meat loses its raw meat color, about 5 minutes. Stir in the chili powder. Remove from the heat and season to taste with salt and black and cayenne peppers.

4. Butter a 2½ quart casserole dish. Arrange half the noodles in the casserole, cover with half the meat mixture, half the tomato sauce and half the corn. Add the remaining noodles, meat, tomato sauce and corn in the same order. Pour the reserved white sauce over the casserole and sprinkle with cheese. Bake until bubbly, about 1 to 1½ hours.

— James McNair, *"Beef Cookbook"* (Chronicle Books, 1989)