

Brioche Breakfast Casserole

with Caramelized Onions, Applewood Smoked Bacon, and Gruyère Cheese



Ingredients

- 8-10 slices, dried Brioche slices, cut into cubes (about 4 cups)
- 12 ounces Nueske's Applewood Triple-Thick Cut Bacon (5 slices) * Cooking instructions below, chopped
- 6 slices traditional pre-cooked, microwaved bacon, (45 seconds), chopped
- 1 lb Gruyère cheese, shredded
- Caramelized onions from 3 lbs of yellow onions * Cooking instructions below
 - 3 lbs Yellow Onions, thinly sliced
 - 3 Tsp Butter
 - 2 Tsp Olive oil
 - approximately 1/2 of the bacon grease from the pan
 - 2 Tsp Sugar
- 12 large eggs
- 2 1/4 cups half and half
- 2 teaspoons dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground pepper

Preparation

You can cook the bacon and caramelize the onions ahead of time, but you want to do them at the same time. You will want some of the bacon grease to cook the onions. So cook the bacon first while you are slicing the onions.

Cooking the Bacon

This is for the Nueske's bacon only. See above to the other bacon. Note: The Neuske's bacon is meaty, intensely smoked and delicious but too much can overpower everything.

Nueske's Applewood Triple-Thick Cut Bacon is by far the best bacon you will ever eat. Yes, it is mail order only and a bit pricey, but you will not regret the spend. I will buy it and portion it out and freeze it until I am ready to use it. Generally, it is for special occasions.

Heat the oven to 350 degrees. Place the Triple-Thick Cut Bacon on a non-stick sheet pan with a 1/2 lip. Then place another sheet pan on top of the bacon, so it is sandwiched between the pans. Put the pans on the lowest rack in the oven and bake for 10 minutes or until crispy on the outside with a soft interior.

Sandwiching the bacon between the pans keeps the bacon from curling and the grease from splattering. When done, allow the bacon to cool, then slice into 1/4 inch pieces and mix in with the other chopped bacon. Set aside.

Making the Caramelized Onions

For this step, you will need a 12-inch diameter skillet and the ingredients for above the onions. Slice the onions as thin as possible. I tend to cut a finger whenever I slice onions, so I came up with this trick. If you have an English Muffin Splitter, stick it through the entire onion. Then slice on each side of the metal skewer. If the ends hang over the end of the Splitter, you can carefully make several cuts, and the onion should not move. It is super fast, and I never cut a finger anymore.

For the next 15-25 minutes, this will require your undivided attention.

Place the butter, olive oil and bacon fat in the skillet over high heat. Move the butter around, so it melts and does not burn. Toss in a single slice to see if it sizzles when it hits the fat. If no, wait until it is sizzling. Once melted and sizzling, quickly pour the melted fats on the bowl of onions and toss to coat.

Then quickly add back into the hot skillet. It should fill the skillet with room to toss. With a pair of tongs, about every 20 seconds, gently move the onions around. Pull up the onions on the bottom of the pan to the top.

Because you have been continuously tossing the onions as they cook, they should all have a soft exterior at this point. Sprinkle with the 2 tablespoons of sugar and toss well. The onions will begin to caramelize. Switch to a metal spatula to scrape up the fond (crispy brown bits) from the bottom of the pan. Continue cooking until the onions are soft through and through and a caramel brown color.

Put a strainer in the same bowl that held the onions, and scrape all of the cooked onions into the colander to drain off any excess fat. Set aside.

Completing the Casserole

Spray a 9×13 glass or enameled cast iron baking dish with non-stick cooking spray. Place bread cubes in the prepared dish. Spread the caramelized onions over the top of the bread. Sprinkle both kinds of bacon over the top of the onions and bread. Sprinkle the freshly grated cheese over the top of the bacon.

Side note: This is as far as I got on Saturday before the birthday party, so I put it in the fridge until I returned home. At 2:00 am, I got home, cleaned the kitchen and then proceeded with the recipe.

In a medium-size bowl, beat together the eggs, milk, dry mustard, salt, and pepper. Beat until all of the eggs are well blended. Pour the egg mixture over the cheese. Cover the casserole with foil and refrigerate overnight or for at least 8 hours.

Remove the casserole from the fridge so it can take the chill off, so it will cook evenly. I took mine out 2 hours before it went into the oven.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Bake the casserole, covered with foil, for 30 minutes. Uncover and bake for an additional 15-20 minutes or until the middle of the casserole is puffed and set. Check by inserting a butter knife into the center. It should come out almost clean. Cut into squares and serve warm.