

COVER STORY

SUPER (BOWL) SPREAD

Sack big-game
 cravings with
 these treats

CRAIG WIECZORKIEWICZ

craigw@mywebtimes.com
 (815) 431-4082

Those who plan to make their homes Super Bowl Central for family and friends Sunday face the choice of whether to order in food or make their own to feed the hungry, football-cheering masses.

Larry Bayer opts to do the latter, with his pièce de résistance — a Mexican enchilada casserole he has made for get-togethers for six or seven years.

"It's a pretty good dish that always seems to go over well with people," the Ottawan said. "It's kind of unique because it's just like lasagna, but you use tortilla chips instead of noodles. Some people turn their noses up at it at first, but then they like it after they try it."

Bayer says he got the original recipe out of a wild game cookbook, but adjusted it in accordance with his tastes.

Other recipes he uses for get-togethers include stuffed mushrooms and his signature homemade dish, "deer balls," which are deer meatballs mixed with grape jelly, barbecue sauce, onions and hot peppers.

LARRY BAYER'S MEXICAN ENCHILADA CASSEROLE

2 pounds lean ground beef
 1 medium onion, chopped
 1 clove garlic, minced
 1 can (8 oz) tomato sauce
 3 tablespoon chili powder
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 1 can (10 3/4 oz) cream of chicken soup
 1/2 cup milk
 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
 1 cup shredded monterey jack cheese
 1 package (8 oz) taco shells, crushed
 Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a two-quart oven-safe casserole dish. In a large skillet, brown meat, onion and garlic. Once brown, add tomato sauce, chili powder and salt. Set aside in a small bowl. Blend soup and milk. Layer one-third of shells in casserole dish, followed by half of the meat mixture, half of soup-milk mix then one-third of cheese. Continue layering with one-third shells, half meat, half soup, one-third cheese, one-third shells, and one-third cheese. Cook 45 minutes. Take



Side Larry Bayer's Mexican Enchilada Casserole with beans and rice for a tasty and satisfying Super Bowl meal. Don't forget the sour cream.

Avoid Super Bowl Bloating

Bill Downs doesn't expect people to eat only healthy food while watching the Super Bowl on Sunday. But he recommends football fanatics at least gobble down a few wholesome foods sometime that day.

"If you're going to eat that hot dog, do it between (eating) apple sections," said Downs, a dietician based near Philadelphia.

Downs is the author of the Trafon blog (www.Trafon.org), which is dedicated to discussing the root causes of digestive disorders, gastrointestinal diseases and what people can do to prevent them.

With all the junk food traditionally consumed by Super Bowl watchers, he notes, it's no wonder they often go home suffering from stomach pain, heartburn, indigestion, bloating and flatulence.

"You need to develop a better relationship with nature. Eat natural foods," Downs said. "Be good to your digestive system, because the more garbaged-up your system is, the worse the problems are going to be for you."

Downs doesn't expect people to completely do away with all the bean dips, chips, tacos, beer and sodas, but don't overdo it, he said.

"Events like the Super Bowl have become a sort of sanctioning of overeating," Downs said. "If you're going to make your stomach take on that burden, at least fortify it by getting some organic foods into your system as well."

Fresh vegetables and fruits, oatmeal and whole grain bread are some good candidates for Super Bowl health foods, he said.

out of oven, let cool, and garnish with sliced jalapenos.

LARRY BAYER'S STUFFED MUSHROOMS

Take some large white mushrooms and pull the stem section out of them. Take a pound mix of half pork, half sausage, roll into small balls that will fit into mushrooms, and season. Pan fry in olive oil and onions until brown

on both sides. Place inside mushrooms and put onto a pan on raised rack in oven. Season with sweet vermouth and cook for 30 minutes at 350 degrees. Cool and serve.

For those who want to add an extra touch by making dishes identified with the hometowns of the two Super Bowl teams, the Food Network's Web site (www.food-network.com) lists several specialties from Pittsburgh and Seattle.