

Creamy Baked Mac and Cheese Recipe



10-15 servings



15 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb Cavatappi pasta (or any pasta you prefer)
- 1.5 sticks of butter
- ½ cup flour
- 3 cups whole milk
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp paprika
- 16oz block Extra Sharp Cheddar cheese (4 cups shredded)
- 1 cup panko breadcrumbs
- 8oz block Gruyere Cheese (2 cups shredded)
- Salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat your oven to 400 degrees.
2. Fill a large pot with water, salt the water generously with table salt (at least 3 tsps.), and put it on medium-high heat to bring it to a boil.
3. Put it on medium-high heat to bring it to a boil. While waiting for your pot to boil, shred all the cheese using a cheese grater. You can choose to purchase already shredded cheese, but those cheeses are coated with anti-caking agents to keep them from sticking in the bags, which makes it harder for them to melt into a creamy cheese sauce.
4. Mix the cheese, and separate out about 1.5 cups for the topping.
5. Leave all the cheese on the counter and allow it to get to room temperature, which will also help it melt more easily into the sauce.
6. By now your water should be boiling, pour in your pasta and cook it fully according to the instructions on the box. Once taste tested to your satisfaction, drain the cooked pasta noodles and set aside.

7. Now it's time to make your sauce. Start by making a roux by combining 1 stick of butter and ½ cup of flour. Allow your butter to melt on low heat completed before dumping in the flour.
8. Once you add the flour mix it in quickly and make sure you get out all the lumps. I prefer to use a whisk for this part but it's not necessary, a wooden spoon will work just fine. Cook until the roux turns slightly brown in color then it's time to add your liquids.
9. Pour in 3 cups of whole milk, and 1 cup of heavy whipping cream into the roux, and whisk together until completely incorporated and you can no longer see any light brown roux floating around.
10. Add in the Dijon mustard, paprika, salt, and pepper to taste. At this point, you could even add in a bundle of fresh thyme for a little extra flavor if you have some in the house.
11. Cooking on medium heat, all your cream to warm and start to simmer. Continue stirring while the mixture starts to thicken. You will need to cook this down for about 15 minutes or until the back of a wooden spoon is completely coated with a thick creamy substance.
12. Remove from heat and start adding your cheese, one handful at a time. Whisk in each handful allowing it to melt completely before adding in more.
13. Once all cheese has been added, pour drained noodles into your cheesy sauce and stir until everything is coated. Set aside.
14. Melt ½ stick of butter in a small skillet then add your panko breadcrumbs to brown on medium heat. This should take about 4 minutes stirring consistently. Once browned to your liking, take off the heat and transfer into a cool dish immediately.
15. Time to assemble and bake. Butter all sides of a large cast iron skillet. Pour half the cheesy noodles into the skillet, top with half the 1.5 cups of cheese you saved to the side, then pour the remaining cheesy noodles on top until you reach the top of the cast iron skillet.
16. Top with the rest of the shredded cheese (it should cover the entire top), then sprinkle with your browned breadcrumbs.
17. Throw the entire skillet into the oven for 20 minutes. It should be browned and melted on top with bubbling sides when it's ready to come out. If you like it more brown you can broil it for 2 minutes before taking it out of the oven.
18. Serve piping hot.
19. Note: This can be reheated as well, but I suggest using the oven at the same temperature for less time to keep your cheese sauce from splitting.