

Creamy Homemade Baked Mac and Cheese

This baked mac and cheese is a family favorite recipe, loved by children and adults.



4.74 from 1161 votes

Prep Time	Cook Time	Total Time
20 mins	15 mins	35 mins

Course: Main Course, Side Dish Cuisine: American

Keyword: mac and cheese, macaroni and cheese Servings: 8 - 10 servings Calories: 665kcal

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Ingredients

- 1 lb. dried elbow pasta
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup all purpose flour
- 1 1/2 cups whole milk
- 2 1/2 cups half and half
- 4 cups grated medium sharp cheddar cheese divided (measured after grating)
- 2 cups grated Gruyere cheese divided (measured after grating)
- 1/2 Tbsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 1/4 tsp. paprika

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees F and grease a 3 qt baking dish (9x13"). Set aside.
2. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. When boiling, add dried pasta and cook 1 minute less than the package directs for al dente. Drain and drizzle with a little bit of olive oil to keep from sticking.
3. While water is coming up to a boil, grate cheeses and toss together to mix, then divide into three piles. Approximately 3 cups for the sauce, 1 1/2 cups for the inner layer, and 1 1/2 cups for the topping.
4. Melt butter in a large saucepan over MED heat. Sprinkle in flour and whisk to combine. Mixture will look like very wet sand. Cook for approximately 1 minute, whisking often. Slowly pour in about 2 cups or so of the milk/half and half, while whisking constantly, until smooth. Slowly pour in the remaining milk/half and half, while whisking constantly, until combined and smooth.
5. Continue to heat over MED heat, whisking very often, until thickened to a very thick consistency. It should almost be the consistency of a semi thinned out condensed soup.
6. Remove from the heat and stir in spices and 1 1/2 cups of the cheeses, stirring to melt and

- combine. Stir in another 1 1/2 cups of cheese, and stir until completely melted and smooth.
7. In a large mixing bowl, combine drained pasta with cheese sauce, stirring to combine fully. Pour half of the pasta mixture into the prepared baking dish. Top with 1 1/2 cups of grated cheeses, then top that with the remaining pasta mixture.
8. Sprinkle the top with the last 1 1/2 cups of cheese and bake for 15 minutes, until cheesy is bubbly and lightly golden brown.

Notes

Mac and Cheese can be made ahead:

- Make as directed (but do not bake), transfer to baking dish and cool completely. Cover tightly with foil and refrigerate 1-2 days ahead.
- Before baking, let dish sit on counter for 30 minutes.
- Bake at recipe temperature for 25-35 minutes, until hot and bubbly.

FIVE CHEESE VARIATION:

Replace cheese amounts with the following:

- 2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 cup Colby cheese, shredded
- 1 cup Muenster cheese, shredded
- 1 1/2 cups Gruyere cheese, shredded
- 1/2 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded

FOR A CRUNCHIER TOPPING AND FIRMER CONSISTENCY:

- Prepare recipe as directed but bake at 350 or 375 F degrees for 20-30 minutes. Broil at the end of baking for approximately 2-5 minutes, until golden brown and crunchy.

Nutrition

Calories: 665kcal | Carbohydrates: 43g | Protein: 28g | Fat: 41g | Saturated Fat: 25g | Cholesterol: 126mg | Sodium: 700mg | Potassium: 300mg | Fiber: 1g | Sugar: 3g | Vitamin A: 1320IU | Vitamin C: 0.6mg | Calcium: 711mg | Iron: 1.3mg