

Baked Macaroni and Cheese

Ingredients

Pasta and cheese

- 4 tablespoons flour
- ½ tablespoon dried mustard
- 1 egg
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 3 cups whole milk
- 400 grams (about 15 ounces) sharp cheddar cheese, grated
- 150 grams (about 5 ounces) gruyere cheese, grated
- 1 pound small pasta shells

Crispy topping

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup breadcrumbs (panko recommended)
- Sprinkle of dried parsley
- Sprinkle of dried basil
- Grated parmesan, to your taste
- Sprinkle of paprika

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350°. Bring a pot of water to boil for the pasta. Mix flour and dried mustard in a small bowl. Whisk an egg in a small bowl until almost fluffy.

In a large pot or Dutch oven, melt the butter. Reduce heat to low and gradually whisk in flour and mustard mixture. The mixture will begin to brown and fluff up. Then slowly whisk in milk, stirring to prevent clumps from forming. Bring to a low simmer for 10 minutes. It will become very heavy and soft. Then turn the heat as low as possible (or off) and temper the egg into the mixture: whisk it quickly to prevent the egg from cooking. Mix in about ¾ of the grated cheeses, a small handful at a time, stirring and waiting for all the clumps to melt before adding more. If you turned the heat off earlier, you can turn it back on to help melt the cheese.

Meanwhile, cook pasta al dente, strain, and immediately rinse well with cold water to remove extra starch. Don't worry about perfectly timing the sauce and the pasta.

Once the cheese mixture is melted and smooth, add the pasta to it, mix, and pour into a 9x13 pan. Sprinkle the rest of the grated cheese on top.

To make the crispy topping, melt the butter in a large pan. Don't worry if the butter browns (I think it makes it better). Add the breadcrumbs, parsley, basil, and parmesan and cook

until the breadcrumbs are slightly toasted. Spread evenly on top of the macaroni and cheese, then lightly sprinkle a little paprika on top.

Cover with foil, bake for 15 minutes, then remove foil and bake for 15 minutes more (30 minutes total). Remove from oven and let sit at least 20 minutes before eating.

Leftovers

Store in the fridge covered for extra meals. It heats up easily and packs well (if you have a way to heat it up at work). A small amount makes a hearty side dish while a large amount can be a great main dish along with a salad.