

Decadent Mac & Cheese

This mac & cheese recipe will knock your socks off! It's that goood! It's decadent, gooey and so cheesy. Adding bacon and a breadcrumb topping add layers of flavors that just makes it that much better. Don't even think about calories on this, it would ruin your pleasure!

Serves 12 | Prep time 30 minutes | Cooking time 30-35 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 pound elbow macaroni
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4-6 bacon strips
- Butter or cooking spray to oil the casserole dish
- Smoked or regular paprika for dusting (optional)

Crunchy topping

- 1 ½ cups panko breadcrumbs
- 4 tablespoons butter
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese, shredded

Cheese sauce

- 4 cups sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 2 cups Swiss cheese, shredded, like Gruyere or Emmentaler
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
- 3 cups whole milk
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

1. Cook the macaroni according to the package instructions for the pasta to be al dente (still will a bit of a bite to it). Rinse, drain, and add pasta to a large bowl. Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil and stir to coat. Set aside.
2. While the macaroni is cooking, cook the bacon in the microwave until it's crispy, about 30-60 seconds per strip. Let cool down and cut into small pieces. Set aside

To make the crunchy topping

1. Melt the butter in the microwave.
2. Add the panko breadcrumbs and Parmesan cheese to a small bowl. Stir to combine.
3. Add the melted butter and stir to combine well. Set aside.

To make the sauce

1. Preheat oven to 350°F and coat lightly with cooking spray or butter a 3 or 4-quart casserole dish and set aside.
2. Mix the cheddar and Swiss cheeses in a bowl. Set aside.
3. Melt butter in a deep large saucepan over medium-low heat. Add the flour and whisk slowly until bubbly, about 1-2 minutes. Slowly add the milk and heavy cream while continuously whisking until bubbles form, about 3-5 minutes
4. Add two-third of the shredded cheeses gradually and whisk until smooth before adding more cheese. The sauce should thicken, be smooth and creamy, and be lump-free.
5. Season to taste with salt and pepper and mix in the reserved bacon.
6. Add the reserved macaroni and stir to coat well.
7. Place macaroni cheesy mixture into the casserole dish. Add the remaining shredded cheese evenly on top. Cover with the remaining macaroni cheesy mixture.
8. Evenly spread the panko topping over the mac and cheese. Dust with paprika to taste if desired.
9. Place the casserole dish in the preheated oven, uncovered. Bake for 30-35 minutes, until bubbly and golden.

Note: to make it vegetarian, just omit the bacon.

Decadent Cauli & Cheese

If you want to feel a bit less guilty, try this healthier version where the pasta is replaced by cauliflower. It's as decadent because of the richness of the cheese sauce and the bacon and the crunchy topping. Best of all, it's keto-friendly!

Serves 8 | Prep time 20 minutes | Cooking time 60-65 minutes

Ingredients

2 medium-sized cauliflower heads, trimmed and cut into florets
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper
6 bacon strips
Olive oil or coconut oil to grease the casserole dish
Smoked or regular paprika for dusting

Crunchy topping

½ cup pork rind panko crumbs
½ cup Parmesan cheese, shredded
2 tablespoons melted butter

Cheese sauce

1 cup heavy whipping cream
4 cups sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
2 cups Swiss cheese, shredded, like Gruyere or Emmentaler
6 ounces cream cheese, cubed
1 teaspoon garlic powder
½ teaspoon chili powder
Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone mat.
2. Add the cauliflower florets to a large bowl. Add the olive oil and season to taste with salt and pepper. Mix to coat.
3. Place the cauliflower evenly on the baking sheet. Bake in the oven for 40 minutes, tossing once or twice.
4. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool.
5. While the cauliflower is baking, cook the bacon in the microwave until it's crispy, about 30-60 seconds per strip. Let cool down and cut into small pieces. Set aside

To make the crunchy topping

1. Mix the pork rind panko crumbs, the Parmesan cheese, and melted butter. Set aside.

To make the sauce

1. While the cauliflower is baking and bacon is cooked, start on the cheese sauce.
2. Coat lightly with cooking spray or butter a 9x13-inch casserole dish and set aside.
3. Mix the cheddar and Swiss cheeses in a bowl. Set aside.
4. In a large and deep saucepan, warm the cream over medium heat until it simmers, about 3-4 minutes.
5. Add the cream cheese and shredded cheeses gradually and whisk until smooth before adding more cheese. The sauce should thicken, be smooth and creamy, and be lump-free.
6. Add the garlic powder and chili powder. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
7. Add the cauliflower and reserved bacon. Stir to coat well.
8. Place cauliflower cheesy mixture into the casserole dish.
9. Evenly spread the crunchy topping on top and dust with paprika to taste if desired.
10. Place in the preheated oven, uncovered. Bake for 15-20 minutes, until bubbly and golden.

Note: To make it completely vegetarian, replace the pork rind by panko breadcrumbs and omit the bacon.