

BAKED MAC & CHEESE

YIELD: 6 - 8 portions

TIME: 90 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup of panko crumbs
- 6 tablespoons butter (4 for roux, 2 for panko topping)
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 4 cups 2% milk
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon mustard powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 pinch of cracked black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg (ground if you don't have fresh)
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 cups grated Gruyere cheese
- 1 cup grated Aged Ontario Cheddar
- 1 cup of grated Parmigiano Reggiano (1/3 for topping and 2/3 for cheese sauce)
- 1 pound of the short pasta of your choosing. Elbow pasta is the classic choice, but we also like Penne, Rigatoni, Cavatappi, Fusilli, Farfalle & Shells

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees
2. Bring large, heavy bottom pot of heavily salted water to a boil.
3. Cook the short pasta of your choice, 2 – 3 minutes less than what is indicated on the package. You want your pasta to be undercooked, it will continue cooking in the cheese sauce when you back it in the oven later.
4. Once the pasta has reached doneness (soft on the outside, raw/hard on the inside) drain and set aside. Reserve 1 cup of pasta water and set aside.
5. Run pasta under cold water to cool & keep from continuing to cook.
6. Make a roux! Melt 4 tablespoons Butter in your large heavy bottom pot, over moderately low heat, then whisk in flour and cook roux, whisking constantly. Your roux should have the colour and consistency of light sand.
7. Add mustard powder to roux and stir.
8. Whisk in 2% Milk and bring to a boil, whisking constantly. Add Bay Leaf. Reduce heat and simmer, whisking occasionally, for about 4 - 5 minutes or until its thick enough to coat the back of a spoon.
9. Remove Bay Leaf, whisk in Cayenne, Salt, Pepper and Nutmeg.
10. Slowly add all Cheese, except 1/2 cup of grated Parm which will be saved for the topping.
11. Whisk until combined and melted. If the Cheese sauce is too thick (stiff and difficult to mix) slowly add some of the left over pasta water until the sauce loosens.
12. Add pasta and mix until all noodles are covered evenly with the cheese sauce.
13. Transfer pasta and cheese sauce to a large baking dish.
14. Sprinkle the remaining Parmigiano Reggiano and Panko crumbs to cover the top evenly.
15. Melt remaining Butter and pour over the Panko and Parm topping.
16. Place in the oven, middle rack and bake for 20 - 30 minutes or until the topping is golden brown.