

Creamy Homemade Baked Mac and Cheese

Serves 8 - 10

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:

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F and grease a 3 qt baking dish (9x13"). Set aside.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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