Our Old-Fashioned Baked Mac and Cheese recipe will impress your family and friends with its creamy, cheesy, and comfort-food goodness. This classic dish combines elbow macaroni, sharp cheddar cheese, and a rich, velvety sauce for a delicious and satisfying meal.

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Hello friends, and welcome to Cheese Lovers! Today, we are diving into the ultimate comfort food dish that has been a staple in kitchens and hearts for decades: our Old-Fashioned Baked Macaroni and Cheese. This classic recipe is a testament to the power of simple ingredients coming together to create something truly extraordinary. It's the kind of dish that brings back memories of family gatherings and cozy dinners, and it's one that we know will become a cherished part of your own family traditions.

This is not just any ordinary baked mac and cheese; we're talking about a creamy, dreamy sauce that envelops tender elbow macaroni, topped with a golden-brown, bubbly cheese crust that is simply irresistible. It's the perfect side dish to accompany your favorite meal, or it can stand on its own as a delicious and satisfying vegetarian main course.

OLD-FASHIONED BAKED MACARONI AND CHEESE

Our Old-Fashioned Baked Macaroni and Cheese is a classic comfort food that has been cherished for generations. It's a dish that evokes memories of family gatherings, cozy dinners, and simple pleasures. It's not just a recipe, it's a piece of history, a taste of tradition, and a way to connect with your loved ones through food. The beauty of this dish lies in its simplicity. It uses readily available ingredients to create a rich, creamy, and cheesy masterpiece that is sure to satisfy everyone at the table. It's a dish that can be prepared in advance, making it perfect for busy weeknights or entertaining guests. It's also incredibly versatile, allowing you to add your own personal touch by adding your favorite spices or ingredients.

WHY YOU'LL LOVE THIS RECIPE

- **It's the ultimate comfort food:** This dish is all about comfort, bringing to mind cozy evenings and family gatherings. The combination of creamy sauce, tender pasta, and gooey cheese is pure comfort in every bite. Perfect for any cold or rainy day.
- **It's easy to make:** While it looks impressive, this recipe is surprisingly easy to prepare. The ingredients are readily available, and the instructions are clear and concise.
- **It's versatile:** The possibilities are endless when it comes to customizing your mac and cheese. You can add your favorite spices, vegetables, or even a protein like bacon or ham to create a unique and delicious variation.
- **It's a crowd-pleaser:** This dish is guaranteed to satisfy everyone at the table, from picky eaters to adventurous foodies. It's the perfect dish to share with family and friends.
- **It's a cherished family tradition:** This recipe has been passed down through generations in my family, and it's a dish that holds many fond memories. It's a way to connect with your loved ones through food and create new memories together.

INGREDIENTS

- **Macaroni:** Elbow macaroni is the classic choice.
- **Butter:** Adds a delicious nutty flavor.
- **Flour:** Thickens the cheese sauce to perfection.
- **Milk:** Adds richness and creaminess to the cheese sauce.
- **Salt and Pepper:** Add salt and pepper to taste for a dash of flavor.
- **Cheddar Cheese:** Sharp cheddar cheese provides a rich and tangy flavor that complements the creamy sauce.

Gather the recipe and begin by ensuring all ingredients are prepared.

SUBSTITUTIONS & VARIATIONS

While our Old-Fashioned Baked Macaroni and Cheese is delicious as it stands, there are many ways to customize it to your liking. Here's how:

- **Pasta Choice:** While we prefer elbow macaroni for its classic shape and its ability to hold the cheese sauce, you can substitute other pasta shapes like shells, cavatappi, or even penne. The cooking time may vary slightly depending on the shape of the pasta you choose.
- **Cheese Variations:** While cheddar cheese is the classic choice, you can experiment with other cheeses to add a unique flavor profile. Consider adding a blend of cheddar, Monterey Jack, Gruyère, or even a little bit of Parmesan cheese.
- **Adding Vegetables:** To add a touch of healthy goodness, you can incorporate vegetables into the mac and cheese. Steamed broccoli, cauliflower, or even peas are all delicious additions.
- **Adding Protein:** To make this a more substantial meal, you can add protein like bacon, ham, or even pulled pork. Cook the protein separately and then add it to the mac and cheese before baking.
- **Spice Up:** To add a little kick to the mac and cheese, you can add a pinch of cayenne pepper, paprika, or even a dash of hot sauce.
- **Adding a topping:** Beyond the breadcrumbs, you can add other toppings like crushed crackers, fried onions, or even a sprinkle of extra cheese.

INSTRUCTIONS

Now, let's dive into the instructions for making our delicious and comfort-food-worthy Old-Fashioned Baked Macaroni and Cheese. We'll be using the recipe from the Kitchen Stewardess for this recipe.

Step 1: Take a pot of water to a boil. Add the macaroni and cook for 8 minutes.

Step 2: While the macaroni is still hot, add the butter and stir until it melts.

Step 3: Add the flour and milk to the pot and whisk until smooth.

Step 4: Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring constantly, until it thickens to a creamy consistency. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Step 5: Stir in the cheddar cheese until it melts and the sauce is smooth and creamy.

Step 6: Pour the cooked macaroni into the cheese sauce and stir to combine. Transfer the mac and cheese to a baking dish.

Step 7: Sprinkle the breadcrumbs over the mac and cheese. Bake for 15 minutes, or until the top is golden brown.

RECIPE FAQS

Can I use other pasta shapes?

Yes, you can use other pasta shapes, but keep in mind that the cooking time may vary slightly depending on the shape and size of the pasta.

Can I make this ahead of time?

Yes, you can make this ahead of time by assembling the mac and cheese and refrigerating it overnight. When you are ready to bake, add an extra 10 minutes to the baking time.

Can I freeze the leftovers?

Yes, you can freeze the leftovers for up to 2 months. Thaw in the refrigerator overnight before reheating.

CHEF TIPS

- **Grating your cheese:** For the smoothest and most consistent sauce, it is best to grate your own cheese from a block. Pre-shredded cheese may contain anti-caking agents that can affect the texture of the sauce.
- **Adjusting the sauce:** If the sauce is too thick, you can add a little more milk or water to achieve the desired consistency. Conversely, if the sauce is too thin, you can add more flour or cook it for a longer time to thicken it.
- **Preventing a dry mac and cheese:** To prevent the mac and cheese from drying out, you can add a little milk or cream before baking.
- **Adjusting the seasonings:** Taste the sauce before adding the macaroni and adjust the seasonings to your liking. Remember that the macaroni will absorb some of the sauce, so it should be slightly seasoned before baking.
- **Baking time:** The baking time may vary depending on your oven and the size of your baking dish. Keep an eye on the mac and cheese and adjust the baking time as needed to prevent burning.
- **Adding a crunchy topping:** For a delicious crunch, you can add a mixture of breadcrumbs and melted butter to the top of the mac and cheese before baking.
- **Adding a touch of spice:** To add a little kick to the mac and cheese, you can add a pinch of cayenne pepper, paprika, or even a dash of hot sauce.
- **Serving suggestions:** This dish is a delicious side dish for any occasion, but it can also be served as a main course with a side salad or steamed vegetables.

STORAGE & REHEATING

Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. To reheat, add a little milk or water to the mac and cheese and bake at 350°F (175°C) for 15 minutes, or until heated through.

To prevent leftovers from drying out, you can add a little milk or water before reheating. Alternatively, you can add a few tablespoons of milk, Worcestershire, or Tabasco sauce to the mac and cheese before reheating to add moisture and flavor. Stirring the mac and cheese every 30 seconds in the microwave while reheating will also help to prevent it from drying out.

For frozen leftovers, it is best to thaw the refrigerated overnight before reheating. Avoid reheating frozen mac and cheese directly in the oven or microwave, as this may result in a dry and rubbery texture.

SERVING

The serving instructions are straightforward: it can be hard to tell when the dish is done. Look for the top to be golden brown and the sauce to be bubbly around the edges. The aroma will also be a strong indicator of its readiness.

If you're serving this to a kids' birthday party, it pairs well with the Kitchen Stewardess' Cheesy Chicken Tortilla Soup.

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20 Minutes

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20 Minutes

Cheesy Pizza Bites
20 Minutes

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RECIPE

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Prep time: 10 minutes Cook time: 40 minutes Total time: 50 minutes
Author: Christine Pittman
Recipe type: Side Dish, Main Course, Vegetarian
Cuisine: American Difficulty: Intermediate
Serving size: 6 servings Calories: 450 kcal

EQUIPMENT
- Baking dish
- Pot
- Whisk
- Spoon

INGREDIENTS
- 1 pound macaroni
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 2 cups milk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups cheddar cheese
- 1 cup breadcrumbs (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS
1. Bring a pot of water to a boil. Add the macaroni and cook for 8 minutes, or until al dente. Drain the macaroni and return it to the pot.
2. While still hot, add the butter and stir until it melts.
3. Add the flour and milk to the pot and whisk until smooth.
4. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring constantly, until it thickens to a creamy consistency. Add salt and pepper to taste.
5. Stir in the cheddar cheese until it melts and the sauce is smooth and creamy.
6. Pour the cooked macaroni into the cheese sauce and stir to combine. Transfer the mac and cheese to a baking dish.
7. Sprinkle the breadcrumbs over the mac and cheese. Bake for 15 minutes, or until the top is golden brown.

NOTES
- **Grating your own cheese:** For the smoothest and most consistent sauce, it is best to grate your own cheese from a block. Pre-shredded cheese may contain anti-caking agents that can affect the texture of the sauce.
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NUTRITION
Calories: 450 kcal Carbohydrates: 40 g Protein: 18 g Fat: 25 g Saturated Fat: 15 g Polyunsaturated Fat: 1 g Monounsaturated Fat: 7 g Trans Fat: 0.5 g Cholesterol: 75 mg Sodium: 1200 mg Potassium: 250 mg Fiber: 2 g Sugar: 5 g Vitamin A: 1000 IU Vitamin C: 0 mg Calcium: 500 mg Iron: 1 mg

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