

Macaroni and Cheese

Courtesy of *In Our Grandmothers' Kitchens*

Ingredients:

4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) butter
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
4 tablespoons flour
2-1/2 cups milk
paprika to taste
salt to taste
freshly ground pepper to taste (optional)
1 cup grated cheese (sharp Cheddar or Swiss or a combination; a little Parmesan is nice in here, too), divided
1/2 pound cooked and drained macaroni (I like seashells or wagon wheels, but elbows are fine, too)
more milk to taste (optional)

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

In a heavy saucepan melt the butter, and stir in the mustard. Whisk in the flour and cook, whisking constantly, for a minute or two. You want the mixture (the roux) to cook and merge but not to get brown.

Add the milk a little at a time, whisking constantly. Bring the sauce to a boil. Add paprika to give it a pink tint plus salt and pepper to taste. I love salt, but remember that the cheese you are about to stir in is salty; I'd start with 1/2 teaspoon and add more later as needed.

Reduce the heat and cook, whisking, for 2 more minutes. Remove the mixture from the heat and use a spoon to stir in 3/4 cup of the cheese. (If you continue to whisk with the cheese, your whisk will get gummy!)

In a 1-1/2 to 2-quart casserole dish combine the macaroni and the sauce. Your casserole should be nice and moist. If for some reason it looks a little dry (this can happen if your cheese is very absorbent), stir in a little more milk. It will evaporate in the oven. Take a tiny taste of your sauce and add more salt if you need to.

Sprinkle the remaining cheese on top of the macaroni mixture, and top with a little more paprika. Cover the dish and place it in the oven.

Bake for 20 minutes; then uncover your macaroni and cheese and continue to cook until it is nice and bubbly, 10 to 15 minutes more. Serves 4 to 6.