

Mac and Cheese with Bacon

Ultimate Mac and Cheese with Bacon recipe - creamy, cheesy comfort food with crispy bacon and golden breadcrumb topping. Perfect for family dinners!

15 min

PREP

25 min

COOK

40 min

TOTAL

6

SERVINGS

Easy

DIFFICULTY

Ingredients

- 1 lb pasta
- 6 slice bacon
- 1 cup flour
- 5 tbsp unsalted butter
- 3 cup milk
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 cup cheddar cheese
- 1 cup gruyere cheese
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup parmesan cheese
- 1 cup breadcrumb
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper

Instructions

1 Cook the pasta

Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil over high heat. Add 1 pound of pasta and cook according to package directions until al dente (firm to the bite), about 8-10 minutes. Drain in a colander and set aside.

2 **Cook the bacon**

Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Add 6 slices of bacon and cook for 6-8 minutes, flipping once, until crispy and golden brown. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate to drain excess fat.

3 Once cooled for 2-3 minutes, crumble the bacon into bite-sized pieces and set aside.

4 **Make the cheese sauce**

Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). In a large heavy-bottomed saucepan, melt 5 tablespoons of butter over medium heat until foaming.

5 Whisk in 1 cup of flour and cook for 1-2 minutes, stirring constantly, until the mixture (called a roux) is golden and smells nutty.

6 Slowly pour in 3 cups of milk while whisking continuously to prevent lumps from forming. Cook, stirring frequently, until the sauce thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon, about 4-5 minutes.

7 Reduce heat to low and gradually add 2 cups of cheddar cheese, 1 cup of Gruyère cheese, and 1 cup of mozzarella cheese, stirring after each addition until completely melted and smooth.

8 Season the cheese sauce with 1 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon black pepper, 1 teaspoon garlic powder, and 1 teaspoon smoked paprika, stirring to combine.

9 **Assemble the dish**

Add the cooked pasta and crumbled bacon to the cheese sauce, stirring gently until everything is evenly coated.

10 Transfer the mixture to a greased 9x13-inch baking dish, spreading it evenly with a spoon.

11 In a small bowl, combine 1 cup of panko breadcrumbs with remaining melted butter and 1 cup of Parmesan cheese, mixing until evenly moistened. Sprinkle this topping evenly over the mac and cheese.

12 **Bake and serve**

Bake for 20-25 minutes until the top is golden brown and the cheese is bubbling around the edges. Let cool for 5 minutes before serving to allow the sauce to set slightly.

Tips

Use freshly grated cheese rather than pre-shredded for the smoothest, creamiest sauce without any grittiness.

Cook pasta just until al dente, as it will continue cooking in the oven and absorb sauce.

Make the roux golden brown for better flavor - don't rush this step as it builds the foundation of your sauce.

Add cheese gradually and off the heat to prevent the sauce from breaking or becoming grainy.

Cook bacon until crispy but not burnt, and drain thoroughly to prevent the dish from becoming greasy.

Reserve some bacon and cheese for topping to ensure every bite has that perfect bacon-cheese combination.

Let the dish rest for 5-10 minutes after baking to allow the sauce to set slightly for easier serving.

Add a splash of milk when reheating leftovers to restore the creamy texture.