

# Mac and Cheese with Peanuts

Creamy mac and cheese elevated with roasted peanuts and tomato sauce. A unique twist on the classic comfort food with crunchy texture and rich flavor.

10 min

PREP

30 min

COOK

40 min

TOTAL

6

SERVINGS

Easy

DIFFICULTY

## Ingredients

- 4 tomato
- 7 onion
- 2 clove garlic
- 0.5 cup peanut
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 0 salt
- 0.5 tsp granulated sugar
- 1 pasta
- 3.2 oz kashari cheese

## Instructions

### 1 Cook the pasta

Bring a large pot of salted water to boil over high heat. Add the macaroni and cook according to package directions until just shy of al dente, about 1-2 minutes less than the package suggests. Reserve 1 cup of the starchy pasta cooking water, then drain the pasta.

### 2 Prepare ingredients

Preheat oven to 190°C (375°F). Finely mince 2 cloves garlic. Roughly chop 0.5 cup peanuts into small pieces. Grate 3.2 oz cheese if not pre-grated.

### 3 Toast the peanuts

Heat a large oven-safe skillet or heavy-bottomed pan over medium heat. Add the chopped peanuts and toast, stirring frequently, until golden brown and fragrant, about 3-4 minutes. Transfer peanuts to a plate and set

aside.

#### 4 **Build the sauce base**

In the same pan, heat 3 tablespoons olive oil over medium heat. Add the minced garlic and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant but not browned, about 30 seconds.

#### 5 **Add seasonings**

Season with 0.5 teaspoon salt and a pinch of black pepper. Stir to combine and cook for another 30 seconds until fragrant.

#### 6 **Combine pasta and finish sauce**

Add the drained pasta to the pan and toss to coat with the oil and garlic mixture. Add 1/2 cup of the reserved pasta water and stir until the pasta is evenly coated and glossy, about 1-2 minutes.

#### 7 **Add toppings and bake**

Sprinkle the toasted peanuts evenly over the pasta, then top with the grated cheese. Transfer the pan to the preheated oven and bake for 12-15 minutes until the cheese is melted and golden brown on top.

#### 8 **Remove from oven and let rest for 3-5 minutes to allow the sauce to thicken slightly. Serve immediately while hot.**

## Tips

Toast the peanuts in a dry pan over medium heat, stirring frequently, until they're golden brown and fragrant - this usually takes 3-4 minutes and dramatically improves their flavor.

Use freshly grated cheese instead of pre-shredded for better melting and smoother texture, as pre-shredded cheese contains anti-caking agents that can affect the sauce.

Grate the tomato using the large holes of a box grater, discarding the skin, to create a fresh tomato base that's smoother than chopped tomatoes but fresher than canned.

Don't overcook the pasta initially since it will continue cooking in the oven - aim for just shy of al dente when boiling.

Add the roasted peanuts at the very end of cooking the sauce to preserve their crunch, as they'll soften if cooked too long.

Reserve some pasta cooking water before draining - the starchy water can help thin the sauce if it becomes too thick during mixing.

Let the assembled dish rest for 5 minutes after removing from the oven to allow the sauce to set slightly before serving.

For extra flavor depth, add a pinch of smoked paprika or a dash of hot sauce to the tomato mixture while cooking.