

Mac 'n Cheese

1 lb dry pasta
2 1/2 c whole milk
1 slice onion
1 bay leaf
10 whole black peppercorns
4 Tbsp unsalted butter
1/4 c flour
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 oz fontina cheese, grated (about 1 cup)
12 oz medium cheddar, grated (about 3 cups)
1/2 c panko or crushed ritz crackers

Directions

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Generously butter a 2-quart baking dish.
- Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Stir in the pasta and boil until it is about half-cooked, tender on the surface with a distinct bite still in the center, about 5 minutes. Drain well, rinse with cold water and set aside, tossing from time to time as it cools to avoid sticking.
- Put the milk in the small saucepan with the onion slice, bay leaf and peppercorns. Bring just to a low boil over medium heat, and then take the pan from the heat and let it sit to infuse for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Melt the butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Whisk the flour and cook the roux, whisking constantly, until it foams up and has a very slight toasty smell (it should not brown), 1 to 2 minutes. Strain the warm milk into the pan and whisk to blend. Continue to cook the sauce, whisking often, until it thickens, about 5 minutes. Turn off the heat and gradually whisk in the cheeses until fully melted. Season the sauce to taste with salt and pepper, then add the pasta and stir to fully coat all the pasta with the cheese sauce.
- Pour the mixture into the prepared dish and sprinkle the panko or cracker crumbs evenly over the top. Bake until the macaroni and cheese is bubbling and the top is nicely browned, about 40 minutes. Let sit for about 5 minutes before serving.

Homemade Pasta

3 1/2 c flour
4 eggs
Chilled water
1/4 tsp salt

Making pasta by Hand

- **Mound the flour with the salt on a work surface or large bowl. Make a well in the center and break the eggs into the well. Using a fork or your hands, incorporate the flour into the eggs until you have loosely massed dough. You**

can add a 1/4 tsp of water at a time in order to get the dough to come together

- Dough should be soft and pliable and dry to the touch
- Knead the dough until smooth and elastic (approx. 8 minutes) with a slightly glossy appearance
- Cover with wrap and let dough rest for 30 minutes

Making Pasta with a Mixer

- With dough hook in place, mix the flour and the salt for 2-3 seconds and then add the eggs with the motor running
- Mix until the dough looks like a coarse meal and then a loose ball forms
- If mixture is too wet, add more flour by the tablespoon...if dough is too dry, add more cold water by the teaspoon
- Transfer to a floured surface and knead for 2-3 minutes or until elastic
- Cover with wrap and let dough rest for 30 minutes

Makes 4 servings