Mac & Cheese

This recipe is modestly adapted from the Barefoot Contessa Family Style cookbook. I’ve omitted her sliced tomatoes (elegant as they are, my kids will have no part of them) and cut her recipe in half. The recipe feeds my family of four perfectly but if you’d like to double the recipe, use a 9x13-inch baking dish and increase the cooking time to 35 to 40 minutes.

Servings: 4 as a main course, 6 as a side dish

Ingredients

Kosher salt

Vegetable oil

1/2 pound (8 ounces) macaroni, cavatappi or penne

2-1/2 cups milk

4 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided

1/4 cup all purpose flour

6 oz Gruyère, grated (about 2 cups)

4 oz extra sharp Cheddar, grated (about 1 cup)

1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

1/4 teaspoon nutmeg

3/4 cup fresh white bread crumbs (from 2-3 slices, crusts removed, torn into 1/4-inch pieces)

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F.
2. Drizzle a bit of oil into a large pot of boiling salted water. Add the pasta and cook until al dente, or just slightly underdone. Rinse with cold water and drain well.
3. Meanwhile, heat the milk in a small saucepan over medium heat, but don't boil it. Melt 3 tablespoons of butter in a medium (2-quart) pot and add the flour. Cook over low heat for 2 minutes, stirring with a whisk. While whisking, add the hot milk and cook for a few minutes more, until thickened and smooth. Off the heat, add the Gruyere, Cheddar, ½ tablespoon kosher salt, pepper (¼ tsp), and nutmeg (¼ tsp). Add the cooked pasta and stir well. Pour into a 2-quart baking dish.
4. Melt the remaining tablespoon of butter, combine with the fresh bread crumbs, and sprinkle evenly over pasta and cheese sauce. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, or until the sauce is bubbly and the pasta is browned on the top.

**Note:** To reheat leftovers, cover with aluminum foil and warm in a 300°F oven. Do not microwave.

**Freezer-Friendly Instructions:** This can be frozen unbaked. When you’re ready to cook it, defrost in the refrigerator for 24 hours, then proceed with the baking instructions in the recipe.