



This is the best macaroni and cheese recipe I've written / made. Enough said.

Roasted Broccoli Mac & Cheese

I posted this photo on Facebook, and my friends said, "I want that!" So this one is for you, friends.

For many years, I made homemade baked macaroni and cheese, but anymore, I prefer creamy, luscious mac and cheese right off the stovetop. This recipe delivers. Gruyere and Fontina are excellent melting cheeses. Turmeric gives the pasta that "yellow" color that many of us associate with the mac & cheese of our childhood, and the broccoli contributes a deeply nutty flavor that plays off the Gruyere perfectly. This is no where near the box stuff. This is real deal stomp-your-foot-it's-so-good macaroni and cheese, with a little veg to keep us honest. And honestly, it is better for including the veg.

Serves 2 for dinner with small leftovers (like 1 lunch), or serves 4 as a side dish. Scale up as an entree for larger numbers of hungry people.

Ingredients

5.5 oz elbow macaroni

3 cups broccoli florets

1 cup yellow squash, diced (about half of a medium squash)

1 and ½ cups shredded Gruyere cheese

¾ cup shredded Fontina cheese

¼ pound of pancetta cut into chunks

1 and ¾ cups whole milk, warmed

3 and ½ Tablespoons butter

3 and ½ Tablespoons flour

2 Tablespoons minced jalapeno (optional)

Nutmeg – a big pinch or 3 to 4 grates on a microplane

Hot sauce – a shake

Turmeric – a big pinch

2 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Kosher salt

Black pepper

Steps to do ahead of time (if you wish):

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Wash and cut the broccoli and squash. It's okay to leave a little bit of stem on the broccoli, but focus on the florets and cut into bite-sized pieces. Toss the broccoli and squash in the extra virgin olive oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and spread the veg evenly on a sheet tray (lined with foil for easy clean-up). Roast for 13 to 15 minutes. Keep an eye on it so that you don't overcook.

This step can be done well in advance, and the veg can be held in the fridge until you're ready to make the mac and cheese. This step, alone, offers a great side dish for chicken, steak, and other entrees!

Cut the pancetta into chunks. I buy pancetta in one thick piece, as opposed to thin slices, so that you truly do get bites, not hints, of meat. Thickly-cut bacon (cut into chunks) is a good substitute for pancetta. Cook on the stovetop over medium heat until crispy. Sometimes pancetta needs a splash of olive oil to get it started. Bacon almost always throws enough fat so that oil is not needed. Hold the cooked pancetta (or bacon) in the fridge until you're ready to make the mac and cheese.

Put it all together:

Cook the macaroni according to package instructions. Salt the boiling water to flavor the pasta. Drain pasta when ready.

While the elbow macaroni is cooking, make your cheese sauce. In a medium sauté pan, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the flour and whisk continuously so that the mixture is smooth and the flour is well incorporated – about 2 minutes. Lower the heat to medium low, and slowly add the warmed milk. Keep whisking for a smooth sauce! Allow the sauce to thicken, 3 to 4 minutes.

Take the sauce off the heat and add the nutmeg, a splash of hot sauce, the turmeric, and the jalapenos if using. The turmeric, by the way, is for yellow color. Next, fold in the shredded cheese, a handful at a time. Keep stirring until the cheese is fully melted and the sauce is smooth. Taste for salt and pepper.

Then, add the vegetables and pancetta (stir), followed by the pasta. Welcome to a luscious, creamy macaroni and cheese. Sit back and savor.

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