

Genoa Mac and Cheese

Homemade mac and cheese is better — by far — than any frozen or boxed version. Does anyone want to argue that? No? That's because you'd lose. Ours is super creamy, using a blend of mild and sharp cheese, with a welcome surprise of salame bits in each bite. Pure comfort. Plus a crunchy topping. Could you want anything more? You'll never go back to the box.

Ingredients

5 tablespoons unsalted butter, plus more to grease the pan
Kosher salt
1 pound cavatappi
6 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon dry mustard powder
1/2 teaspoon paprika
1/4 teaspoon cayenne
5 cups milk
1/2 pound sharp Cheddar, grated (about 2 1/2 cups lightly packed)
1/2 pound Monterey Jack, grated (about 2 1/2 cups lightly packed)
5 ounce chunk genoa salame, cut into 1/4-inch cubes (heaping 1 cup)
1 cup panko
1/4 cup finely grated Parmigiano Reggiano or asiago
2 tablespoons olive oil

special equipment

9-by-13-inch baking dish

Directions

Butter a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook until tender, according to box directions. Drain.

Meanwhile, melt the 5 tablespoons of butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Mix the flour, dry mustard, paprika, cayenne and 1 teaspoon salt in a small bowl. Add a little of the dry mixture at a time to the butter, whisking, until it's a smooth paste. Cook, whisking, until the raw flour smells goes away and the paste smells a little nutty, about 2 minutes. Slowly whisk in the milk. Let the sauce come to just a boil, and then continue to cook, whisking, until the sauce thickens, about 5 more minutes. Turn off the heat and add the cheeses in handfuls, whisking to make a smooth sauce.

Preheat the broiler.

Stir in the cooked pasta and genoa cubes until well combined. Scrape into the prepared baking dish. Mix the panko, Parmigiano or asiago, and oil together, scrunching with your hands to incorporate. Sprinkle evenly over the pasta. Broil until the topping browns nicely, 3 to 4 minutes.

total time: 40 minutes

active prep: 40 minutes

serves: 6 to 8

difficulty: *easy*