

## Baked Macaroni and Cheese

**This recipe fills a round aluminum pan, 9-1/4" diameter by 2-3/4" deep (3 quart size).**

- 1 pound dried penne rigate pasta
  - 4 cups grated cheeses: mix 2 cups (c. 8 oz) grated Tillamook Sharp Cheddar (or Members Mark Sharp Cheddar) with 2 cups Dubliner White Cheddar (aged). (Both sold at Sam's Club)
  - 1-1/2 cups shredded Mozzarella cheese
  - 1/2 stick (4 tablespoons) unsalted butter
  - 3 cups whole milk (or 1-1/2 cups milk and 1-1/2 cup Half & Half)
  - 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
  - 1/2 teaspoon salt
  - 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
  - 1/4 teaspoon white pepper
  - 1/4 teaspoon dry mustard
  - 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg
  - 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
  - 1:1 ratio mixture of finely chopped Cheezits (Original) and Panko Bread Crumbs, Plain (1 cup of Cheezits crumbs and 1 cup Bread Crumbs will cover about two pans)
1. Prep: Grate and mix the two cheddar cheeses. Mix the 6 dry spices in a small bowl. Pulse the Cheezits in a blender and put into a Tupperware container; add an equal amount of bread crumbs and shake to mix a 1:1 ratio. Lightly coat baking dish/pan with olive oil.
  2. Bring a large pot of water to a boil, then add pasta; add a little olive oil and cook pasta to manufacturer's instructions. Transfer to a colander, rinse briefly under cold running water to stop cooking, and drain well. Sprinkle olive oil on pasta and stir to coat so they will not stick together.
  3. Melt butter in a pot (4-quart or larger) over low to medium heat. As soon as it is crackling, toss in the flour and stir with a spatula or wooden spoon to scrape the bottom and form a thick paste (about 45 seconds). Note: tipping the pot makes it easier to mix the flour and butter. Add milk gradually, about a half-cup each time, and stir, scraping across the bottom and around edge of pot until it begins to thicken (film on the back of the spoon). If the mixture sticks to the bottom of the pot, remove the pot from the heat, continue scraping while you lower the temperature, then return the pot to the heat when the bottom is clean. Blending and heating the milk may take 6 to 8 minutes, which is needed to cook the flour and avoid having a hint of raw flour in the flavor.
  4. Gradually add the mixed cheeses (a cup or two at a time) and stir until melted. Then add the Mozzarella, which will melt quickly. Remove the pot from the heat and stir in the mixed spices. (Removing the pan from the heat before adding the spices may prevent them from sticking to the bottom of the pot). Add the cooked pasta and stir briefly to thoroughly coat the pasta. The sauce will thicken as it is cooled by the pasta, so mix them quickly; then transfer the entire mixture into the baking pan (already coated with olive oil). Sprinkle the Cheezits & bread crumb mixture over the top to give it a crunchy finish.
  5. Cover the dish with foil and bake at 350F for about 40 minutes to get an internal temp of 145 to 150F. (Less time is required to reach 150F if the dish is shallow.) Then remove foil and bake at 400 F for 10 minutes to toast the bread crumbs. Remove and let stand for 10 minutes on a rack.
  6. Some cheeses break down (oil separates out) at about 185F, so avoid over-heating. Cover and refrigerate any leftover; individual servings can be reheated in the microwave.