

Christmas Mac and Cheese

Now that I have personally received well over "a million" requests for it, with excruciating humility, I am pleased to Grant to you, my recipe for the greatest comfort food ever invented in the free world!

But seriously, when Jamie Oliver asked me to share this secret, old family recipe with him, I said "Who-the-heck is Jamie Oliver?" ... I promised this recipe to the legions of Jane's faithful, adoring students, whom are all still reeling in shock from the news that their hot-lunch program was being cut next year - I didn't promise this to Mr. Oliver. Come-on Jamie, get with the program and start pulling your own weight for a change...

For those of you who get a little squeamish around FAT, I have calculated that one would have to eat this dish at least three or four times before it started to have any measurable, negative-impact on one's health. I had the foresight to get each of our guests to sign a waiver on this matter - pretty smart huh?

Don't get too hung-up on the exact proportions, for numerous reasons I usually approximate when I cook, and it turns out a little different each time - so, use-the-room and have fun! (worry about the fat later - please note that I'm not saying don't worry - just don't worry right-now)

Ingredients

½ cup butter

1 large garlic BULB, peeled and crushed/pressed

1 tbsp. flour

2 cups cream (OR ½ cup cream and 1 bottle/can of beer)

2 tbsp. Dijon mustard

2 ½ cups cheese, grated (sharp cheddar, smoked cheddar, Asiago and chèvre are a nice combo - learn from my mistake and don't try to grate the chèvre)

1 cup grated cheddar cheese (for the topping)

½ cup chopped sun-dried tomatoes

2 lbs. dried macaroni

2 tbsp. vegetable oil

Salt and pepper

Directions

Melt the butter in a saucepan, at low heat.

Add the pressed garlic and sauté slowly for a few minutes, stirring frequently.

Add the flour and stir constantly for a minute or two, just until the flour and garlic begin to brown slightly.

Slowly whisk-in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the cream (you may need to add a little more) and keep whisking until it develops into a thick liquid.

Stir-in the mustard and raise the heat to medium-low.

You may now stir-in the remaining ($1\frac{1}{2}$ cups) cream OR the beer (I do-so prefer the beer version).

If using beer, you will have to reduce it for a few minutes, stirring occasionally, until it has thickened a bit.

Slowly add the $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups of cheese, stirring frequently until it has all melted, remove from heat and add salt and pepper to taste.

Meanwhile,

Pre-heat oven to 350° F.

Bring a pot of salted water to boil, add vegetable oil and pasta and cook pasta until it is not-quite done (still a little firm), drain and rinse thoroughly with cold water.

Add the well-drained pasta to a casserole dish and stir-in the cheese-sauce and sun-dried tomatoes.

Top with the remaining cup of grated cheese (feel free to use more) and bake for about 30 - 40 minutes, until the cheese on top begins to brown.

Be sure to serve this with a fine ketchup/catsup, I prefer a "Chateau St. Hubbins '68" or the equivalent.

Make an appointment with your cardiologist...

And... feel free to take full credit for this dish (just keep Jamie out of it, okay?)

Cheers, and all the best in the new-year ladies and gents,

Grant