



Strangely enough this is not a recipe of my childhood. Deprived am I. I learned to make baked cheese pasta dishes at my first kitchen job in Scotland. Baked Mac and Cheese is an ultimate comfort food in its' own right but the cold climate in Scotland makes it all the more comforting. I have a friend Kelly, whom I both worked and attended culinary art school with in Scotland. I happened to notice her placing thinly sliced tomatoes on top of a penne pasta dish she was making before placing it into the oven. I remember being impressed with how the splash of color made the dish pop. The tomatoes turned a usually monochromatic dish bright and cheery. I am a huge admirer of the color red and since that day I always garnish my dishes in the this way and think of our friendship. It is a wonderful how simple acts influence a persons appetite and eye appeal.

I find this recipe freezes very well and accompanies pork chops, meatloaf, glazed ham, steamed vegetables, simple green salad and so on. At the dollar store I discovered 8 1/2 x 6 inch foil pans complete with lids that seal and store well. This recipe uses four pans so you do need to purchase two packages if using them. They are great value and you don't have to clean up, which is a windfall for hectic lifestyles.



Serves 16 3.5 oz servings

Ingredients

1 1/2 lb. elbow macaroni

1 3/4 cup sharp or medium mature cheddar cheese shredded

1/2 cup swiss cheese shredded

1/4 cup shredded Parmesan cheese

5 1/2 cups low fat milk

1 cup flour

1 cup butter

1 tsp Worcestershire sauce

2 tsp Dijon mustard

1 tsp onion powder

1/2 tsp nutmeg

1/2 tsp dried thyme

2-3 sliced tomatoes for garnish

1/4 cup Japanese panko crumbs or bread crumbs

1 tsp salt

1/2 tsp pepper

Method

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, warm through the milk. This makes creating the cheese sauce easier and faster.

In a large pot, bring water to a boil for the pasta. Boil until al dente (slightly firm) considering the pasta will continue to cook when baked in the oven.

Melt butter in another large pot over medium heat, do not allow to brown. Add flour to melted butter, whisk together to combine and cook 1 minute.

Slowly, add all of the milk into flour mixture. Whisking constantly, to avoid lumps until the mixture bubbles and becomes thickened.

Remove pot from heat. Stir in Worcestershire sauce, Dijon mustard, onion powder, nutmeg, salt, pepper and all three cheeses.

To make clean up less difficult, add boiled and drained pasta to the same pot the cheese sauce was prepared in. Stir, from the bottom up until pasta is coated in the cheese sauce.

Pour evenly into prepared containers. Sprinkle with remaining cheese and panko crumbs. Top with sliced tomatoes and add dried or fresh thyme for garnish.

Bake now at 375 ° for 30 minutes and serve or package up, label and freeze for another day.