

Macaroni and Cheese Not from a Box

There are times when you want macaroni and cheese from a box. At such a time, this recipe will simply not do. But there are times when you want the other kind. The kind with lots of real cheese, and a crispy top—the kind that takes more than seven minutes to make. This is it. And it is good.

- 3 cups (750 mL) elbow macaroni, uncooked
- one *double recipe* Basic White Sauce
(see page 115)
- 3 cups (750 mL) grated cheddar cheese
- 1 cup (250 mL) soft bread crumbs
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) butter, melted

Preheat the oven to 350° F (180° C).

Cook the macaroni in lots of boiling water until well done. Really well done. *Not al dente*. Drain and rinse with cold water.

While the macaroni is cooking, make a *double recipe* (this means you should double the amounts of all the ingredients—got it?) of white sauce, adding just a bit of salt and pepper—*nothing else*. Remove from heat and add the grated cheese, stirring until all the cheese is melted and the sauce is nice and smooth and goopy.

Combine the cooked macaroni with the cheese sauce and turn it into a greased 2- or 3-quart (2 or 3 liter) ovenproof casserole.

Mix together the bread crumbs with the melted butter and sprinkle this on top of the macaroni.

Bake at 350° F (180° C) for 30 to 40 minutes, until the sauce is bubbly and the topping is crisp and golden. You can, if you must, eat this with ketchup.

Makes 6 servings, or thereabouts.

Basic White Sauce

Everyone should know how to make a basic white sauce. You will get endless mileage out of this recipe, and your friends will think you're brilliant. You can add some chopped herbs to this, if you like, or grated cheese to make it into cheese sauce.

2 tbsp (30 mL)	butter or margarine
2 tbsp (30 mL)	flour
1 cup (250 mL)	milk
	salt and pepper to taste

In a small saucepan, over low heat, melt the butter. Add the flour stirring it thoroughly into the butter. Cook, very gently, for a couple of minutes. Now, slowly stir in the milk. First the mixture will be lumpy, but as you stir it over the heat, it will become smooth and begin to thicken. Continue cooking the sauce over low heat for at least 5 minutes after it has thickened, but keep stirring so that the bottom doesn't burn and stick.

Now, season the sauce with salt and pepper—a little at a time until it tastes right. If you're using herbs, add them now. If you want to add cheese, take the sauce *off the heat*, and stir in about half a cup of grated cheese (any kind you like), whisking until it's smooth and melted. Don't cook the sauce after you've added the cheese or it will get stringy.

Makes about 1 cup (250 mL) of white sauce, more if you add cheese to it.