

Mac & Cheese with Pears

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Homemade macaroni and cheese with the added surprise of diced pears. It is a nice pairing (if you'll excuse the pun!) with the cheese sauce. I like to add sliced Aidell's Apple and Chicken Sausage for a main dish, but leave it out to use as a side dish. For me, a recipe is a base to start with. I often mix it up with different cheeses. Tillamook smoked cheddar is wonderful in this recipe!

SERVES 8

- 1 8-ounce package elbow macaroni, or your favorite pasta
- ¼ cup butter
- ¼ onion, chopped
- 2½ tablespoons flour, or as needed
- 3 cups milk
- 2 cups shredded extra sharp cheddar cheese
- ½ cup crumbled bleu cheese
- freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 1 12-ounce package fully cooked sausage, sliced (optional)
- 1 pear, peeled, cored and diced

Topping

- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- ½ cup crushed croutons

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 3-quart casserole dish with cooking spray.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Cook elbow macaroni in the boiling water according to package directions. Drain macaroni and pour into the prepared casserole dish.

While the water is boiling, heat butter in a saucepan over medium heat; cook and stir onions in the melted butter until partially translucent, about 5 minutes. Stir in flour until paste-like in consistency, 3 to 5 minutes. Slowly add milk, stirring constantly, until flour mixture is incorporated, about 5 minutes. Stir in cheddar cheese and bleu cheese until completely melted and sauce has thickened, 5 to 10 minutes.

Pour cheese sauce into macaroni; stir to coat. Season with black pepper. Stir in sausage, if desired. Stir pears into macaroni mixture.

Stir 2 tablespoons melted butter and crushed croutons together in a small bowl; sprinkle over macaroni mixture. Bake in the preheated oven until cheese is bubbling and topping is lightly browned, about 30 minutes.