



Mac & Cheese

NIBBLEDISH CONTRIBUTOR

Ingredients

- 1 cup of dried macaroni/fusilli/penne - 200ml full cream milk - 150ml water - sea salt & cracked black pepper - half a cinnamon stick - 4 cloves - 1 tsp dried rosemary - a small knob of butter - 4 rashers of pancetta/smoked bacon, sliced into thin strips - 1 cup grated parmesan cheese, plus extra 6 tbsp - 1 ball of fresh mozzarella cheese, roughly chopped - about 6 tbsp breadcrumbs - 1 tsp truffle salsa (optional)

Instructions

Mac & cheese is probably one of the more artery-clogging comfort foods, and it's also widely available in the boxed/instant variety. However, it's really easy to make on your own, and that also gives you the opportunity to bump the recipe up a notch. This version (as you can see in the picture), is really tending towards a ham and cheese gratin, but hey. I like mac & cheese and that's what I'm calling it. (Makes 6 small servings - i.e. it'll probably serve 2 people for a rich, yet smallish lunch, and give you some leftovers for in the middle of the night.) 1. Preheat your oven to 200°C. 2. Place the milk, water, cinnamon stick, cloves, and rosemary in a small saucepan. Season with a pinch of salt (don't add too much, as the sauce is gonna be pretty salty with the bacon), and a good sprinkle of black pepper. Heat on a medium flame and bring it to a simmer. 3. Add the dried pasta in, and simmer for about 7-10 minutes (you want it just slightly undercooked, but since the liquid is only simmering instead of at a rapid boil, it might take a bit longer). 4. Heat another saucepan over medium-high heat, and melt the butter in a tiny splash of olive oil. When the butter foams, add the bacon in. (Moderate the amount of butter you use according to how much fat there is on the bacon - you really just need a slight taste of the butter.) Fry until cooked through, and browning a little. It should NOT be crispy. Take it off the heat. 5. Drain the pasta over a bowl, reserving the cooking liquid. Pull out the cinnamon stick and cloves, and discard. Place the saucepan with the bacon back on a medium-low heat, and add in 3-4 tbsp of the milk cooking liquid, then add 1 cup of the parmesan cheese. Stir until it's melted. If the

sauce looks too thick, add more of the milk. You want it fairly thin - just able to coat the back of a spoon. 6. Add the pasta back in, and stir until well coated. Take it off the heat, and stir through the truffle salsa, if using. Divide the mixture among 6 ramekins, scatter over the mozzarella, sprinkle over the breadcrumbs, and top with the extra grated parmesan. 7. Place all the ramekins onto a baking tray, and bake for 10 minutes, or until the sauce is bubbling, the cheese has melted, and started to brown a bit. Whack the heat up to 250°C, and turn the oven to grill mode (or place it as close to the top as possible), and heat for a further 3-5 minutes, keeping an eye on it to make sure the cheese doesn't burn. You know it's done when the cheese has melted around the breadcrumbs forming a lovely crispy crust. 8. Remove from the oven, and set aside to cool for 5 minutes, then eat up. :)