Baked Macaroni and Cheese

NIBBLEDISH CONTRIBUTOR

Ingredients

10 oz. orecchiette (translated to “little ears” in Italian-thank you 2 years of Italian courses in college)
2 tbsp butter
2 tbsp flour
2 cups milk
1/8-1/4 tsp cayenne pepper (spice is up to you)
1/8 tsp nutmeg
1/8 tsp paprika
salt/pepper
2 cups grated cheese (I would use a good quality sharp cheddar, Colby, pepper jack and/or Gruyere-it’s up to you but I would at least have 2 different kinds)

Breadcrumb topping: optional
1 tbsp butter
½ cup breadcrumbs (I toasted some rosemary bread in the oven and chopped it in my food processor)

Instructions

Preheat oven to 375.

Cook pasta until just tender and set aside to drain. If you are making your own breadcrumbs, toast the bread in the oven, chop when cooled and then add the butter.

For the sauce, melt the butter in a saucepan over medium-low heat and add flour, whisking constantly. Cook about 3 minutes and then stir in the milk gradually followed by spices. Simmer for 15 minutes.

Stir in 2 cups of cheese of your choice, salt/pepper and macaroni. Pour into casserole dish. Top with more cheese if you wish but I did not. Sprinkle the breadcrumbs on top and bake for 30 minutes until crumbs are lightly browned. Let it stand for 5 minutes before serving. Again, I think tomatoes make a great side with this.