

Mac the Cheese

Ingredients

1 (16 ounce)	Package elbow macaroni
¼ cup	Butter
¼ cup	All-purpose flour
¼ teaspoon	Dried thyme
¼ teaspoon	Cayenne pepper
⅛ teaspoon	Ground black pepper
3 cups	Milk
1 pinch	Ground nutmeg
¼ teaspoon	Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon	Salt
8 oz	Sharp cheddar cheese, grated
8 oz	Pepper jack cheese, grated
½ teaspoon	Dry mustard
1	chipotle pepper (from can with adobo sauce), diced
5 slices	Cooked bacon, diced (or crumbled)

Topping

½ cup	Panko bread crumbs
1 tablespoon	Butter, melted

Directions

Preheat oven to 400°

Fill a large pot with lightly salted water and bring to a rolling boil over high heat. Once the water is boiling, stir in the macaroni, and return to a boil. Cook the pasta uncovered, stirring occasionally, until the pasta is cooked through but still slightly firm, about 8 minutes. Drain well and let cool and transfer the macaroni into a 9x13 inch casserole dish (don't bother greasing it).

Melt ¼ cup butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. When the butter starts to foam and bubble, stir in the flour; cook on medium heat until flour just begins to turn pale yellow, 3 to 4 minutes. Add thyme, cayenne pepper, and black pepper; cook and stir another minute, then whisk in 1 cup of milk until smooth. Pour in remaining milk and whisk again. Bring the sauce just to a simmer.

Stir in nutmeg, Worcestershire sauce, salt, and mustard; simmer on medium-low heat until thickened, about 8 minutes, whisking often.

Remove from heat and add cheeses in batches, stirring until combined. You may need to return to heat to warm sauce up but try to add the cheese off the heat (less lumps!). Finally, stir in the diced bacon and chipotle pepper.

Pour the cheese sauce over the cool macaroni in the casserole dish and stir to thoroughly combine sauce with pasta.

Mix panko bread crumbs and 1 tablespoon melted butter in a small bowl, and sprinkle crumbs on top of macaroni and cheese.

Bake in the preheated oven until panko topping is golden brown, about 20 minutes.

(Full disclosure: adapted from: <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/219166/chef-johns-macaroni-and-cheese/>)