



# Creamy Vegan Mac and Cheese Recipe

## Introduction

Homemade mac and cheese is a beloved comfort food that brings warmth and joy to any table. With its creamy, cheesy sauce and a crispy breadcrumb topping, this recipe from Love and Lemons elevates traditional mac and cheese to new heights. Perfect as a main dish or a hearty side, this dish is sure to become a family favorite.

## Detailed Ingredients with measures

2 cups coarse bread crumbs

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling  
¼ cup grated pecorino cheese  
1 pound elbow macaroni noodles  
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, plus more for the pan  
¼ cup all-purpose flour  
4 cups whole milk  
1 garlic clove, grated  
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard  
½ teaspoon smoked paprika  
½ teaspoon sea salt  
10 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, grated (about 4 cups)  
10 ounces Gruyère cheese, grated (about 4 cups)  
Freshly ground black pepper

## Prep Time

15 minutes

## Cook Time, Total Time, Yield

Cook Time: 30 minutes

Total Time: 45 minutes

Yield: Serves 6-8

This delightful homemade mac and cheese recipe strikes a perfect balance between creamy cheese sauce and a crunchy topping, guaranteeing a comforting meal that everyone will enjoy.

# Detailed Directions and Instructions

## Preheat the oven

Set the oven to 425°F (220°C). Butter a 9×13-inch baking dish to prepare for the mac and cheese.

## Prepare the breadcrumb topping

In a small bowl, mix together 2 cups of coarse bread crumbs and 2 tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil, ensuring the bread crumbs are well-coated. Stir in  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of grated pecorino cheese and mix thoroughly.

## Cook the pasta

Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil. Add 1 pound of elbow macaroni noodles and cook until they are just shy of al dente, about 1 minute less than the package instructions. Once cooked, drain the macaroni and drizzle with olive oil to prevent sticking.

See also Poppy Seed Chicken Casserole

## Make the cheese sauce

In a large pot, melt 4 tablespoons of unsalted butter over medium heat. Once melted, add  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of all-purpose flour and whisk continuously for about 4 minutes, until the mixture turns light golden brown. Gradually whisk in 4 cups of whole milk, followed by 1 grated garlic clove, 1 teaspoon of Dijon mustard,  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of smoked paprika,  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of sea salt, and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Bring the mixture to a simmer, continuing to whisk.

### **Incorporate the cheeses**

Add 10 ounces of grated sharp cheddar cheese and 10 ounces of grated Gruyère cheese to the sauce. Whisk until all the cheese has melted. Continue cooking on medium-low heat while whisking frequently until the sauce thickens slightly, approximately 6 to 8 minutes.

### **Combine pasta and sauce**

Add the drained macaroni to the cheese sauce, stirring until all the pasta is evenly coated with the creamy cheese mixture.

### **Assemble and bake**

Transfer the macaroni and cheese mixture to the prepared baking dish. Evenly sprinkle the breadcrumb topping over the surface. Bake in the preheated oven for about 20 minutes, or until the topping is crisp and the cheese is bubbling.

## **Notes**

### **Serving suggestions**

This mac and cheese can be enjoyed as a main dish or a side item at any meal.

### **Storage**

Leftover mac and cheese can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

### **Reheating**

To reheat, warm in the oven at 350°F (175°C) until heated through. For

extra crispiness, you may broil it for a few minutes at the end.

See also [Fried Pineapple with Coconut Crust](#)



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## Cook techniques

### Prepare the breadcrumb topping

Combine coarse bread crumbs with olive oil to achieve a crispy topping. Mix in grated pecorino cheese for added flavor.

### Cook the pasta

Boil elbow macaroni in salted water until just under al dente. Drizzle

with olive oil post-draining to prevent sticking.

#### **Make the cheese sauce**

Create a roux by melting butter and whisking in flour until golden. Gradually add whole milk while continuously whisking to prevent lumps. Season with garlic, Dijon mustard, smoked paprika, and sea salt.

#### **Incorporate the cheeses**

Add shredded cheddar and Gruyère to the sauce, whisking until fully melted and slightly thickened over medium-low heat.

#### **Combine pasta and sauce**

Stir the cooked macaroni into the cheese sauce, ensuring even coverage for a rich, creamy texture.

#### **Assemble and bake**

Pour the macaroni and cheese mixture into a prepared baking dish. Top with the breadcrumb mixture and bake until the cheese bubbles and the topping is golden brown.

## **FAQ**

#### **Can I use different types of cheese?**

Yes, feel free to experiment with other cheeses that melt well, such as Monterey Jack or Fontina.

#### **How can I make this dish gluten-free?**

Substitute all-purpose flour with gluten-free flour and use gluten-free

pasta.

**Can I prepare mac and cheese in advance?**

Absolutely! You can prepare it up to the baking step and refrigerate. Bake when ready to serve.

**How do I store leftovers?**

Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to three days. Reheat in the oven or microwave.

**What can I add for extra flavor?**

Consider adding ingredients like cooked bacon, sautéed vegetables, or crushed red pepper for added taste and texture.

See also Chocolate Cake with Raspberries

## Conclusion

This homemade mac and cheese recipe offers a delectable mix of creamy cheeses and a crunchy breadcrumb topping, making it a comforting dish ideal for any occasion. The balance of sharp cheddar and Gruyère creates rich flavors that are sure to satisfy cheese lovers. It's a perfect main dish or a delightful side, sure to be a hit at your dining table.

**Classic Mac and Cheese with Bacon**

Add crispy cooked bacon to the cheese sauce for a smoky flavor and an extra layer of richness.

### **Vegetable Mac and Cheese**

Incorporate sautéed vegetables like spinach, broccoli, or roasted cauliflower for added nutrition and taste.

### **Spicy Mac and Cheese**

Mix in diced jalapeños or a dash of hot sauce to give your mac and cheese a spicy kick.

### **BBQ Chicken Mac and Cheese**

Stir in shredded BBQ chicken for a hearty and flavorful twist on the traditional recipe.

### **Mushroom and Truffle Mac and Cheese**

Add sautéed mushrooms and a drizzle of truffle oil for an elegant version of this classic dish.

### **Southwestern Mac and Cheese**

Incorporate black beans, corn, and a blend of spices like cumin and chili powder for a southwestern flair.

### **Buffalo Cauliflower Mac and Cheese**

Fold in roasted cauliflower tossed in buffalo sauce for a tangy and spicy version that's mouthwatering and satisfying.



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