



Festive Mac and Cheese Bake

The Cheese That Started It All

My grandson calls this “hug food.” I think he’s right. It all began with a block of cheddar. I was making a simple macaroni. But I wanted it to feel like a party.

So I added a secret friend: American cheese. It makes everything so silky. Tossing it with cornstarch is my little trick. It stops the cheese from getting greasy. Doesn’t that sound clever?

Why We Stir and Wait

Here is the important part. You bake it covered first. This lets the noodles get tender and cozy. Then you must stir it halfway. I still laugh at that.

Once, I forgot to stir. The top was perfect, but the bottom was soggy! Stirring mixes the heat. It gives every bite the same love. This matters because good food is about sharing care, not just ingredients.

The Magic of the Broiler

Now for the grand finish. The broiler is like a tiny food sun. It turns the top spotty and brown. Watch it closely! Two minutes is all it needs.

Then comes the hardest step. You must let it rest for 25 minutes. I know, the smell is amazing. But waiting lets the sauce thicken up just right. What's your favorite part of making a recipe: the mixing, the baking, or the eating?

A Little Story About Worcestershire

My husband used to hate this sauce. He said the name was too funny. So I started calling it "the flavor wizard." I put a little in the mix.

He ate three helpings. He never asked what was in it. The wizard worked its magic! It adds a deep, savory taste you can't quite name. *Fun fact: Worcestershire sauce is often made from anchovies and vinegar!* It's a tiny ingredient that does a big job.

Why This Dish Feels Special

This isn't just weekday pasta. It's a bake. You put it in a dish and it becomes one beautiful thing. That's why it's festive. It's made to be shared right from the pan.

Food brings us together. A shared meal tells a story. This matters. It says, "I took time for you." Do you have a dish that makes you think of

family?

Your Turn in the Kitchen

I hope you try this. It looks like a lot of steps, but it flows. Just take it one bowl at a time. The eggs and cream make it rich and custardy.

Would you use more hot sauce or less? Tell me how you make it your own. And what music do you like to cook with? I always have the radio on. It makes the waiting time fly by.

Ingredients:

Ingredient	Amount	Notes
Sharp cheddar cheese, shredded	8 ounces (2 cups)	Divided
American cheese, shredded	4 ounces (1 cup)	
Cornstarch	4 teaspoons	Divided
Elbow macaroni	8 ounces (2 cups)	
Heavy cream	1 cup	
Water	2 cups	
Large eggs	2	
Dijon mustard	2 teaspoons	
Hot sauce	2 teaspoons	
Worcestershire sauce	2 teaspoons	
Table salt	½ teaspoon	
Pepper	½ teaspoon	



Festive Mac and Cheese Bake

My Festive Mac and Cheese Bake

Hello, my dear! Come sit at the counter. I'm making my special mac and cheese. It's a cozy, bubbly dish for any happy gathering. I learned this recipe from my friend Mabel years ago. We still laugh about the first time we made it. The cheese sauce was so smooth! Doesn't that smell amazing already? Let's get our hands busy. This recipe feels like a big, warm hug from the oven.

See also [Chocolate Slice Holiday Cookies](#)

Ingredients

- 1 lb dry elbow macaroni
- 8 oz sharp cheddar cheese, shredded (divided)
- 8 oz American cheese, shredded
- 1 tbsp cornstarch (divided)
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 2 cups water
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp hot sauce
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper

Instructions

Step 1: First, move your oven rack up high. Heat your oven to 400 degrees. Grab a big bowl. Toss most of your cheddar and all the American cheese with a little cornstarch. This keeps the cheese from

getting stringy. Now, stir in your dry macaroni elbows. Pour it all into your baking dish. (A hard-learned tip: shred the cheese yourself. The bagged kind doesn't melt as nicely).

Step 2: Use that same bowl—no need to wash it! Whisk the cream and the rest of the cornstarch together. Then add the water, eggs, mustard, and all those tasty sauces. Whisk it until it's one happy, creamy mixture. Pour it slowly over the macaroni in the dish. It will look very wet, but trust me. Cover it tightly with foil and bake for 30 minutes.

What's your favorite cheese for mac and cheese? Share below!

Step 3: Carefully take the dish out. The foil will be hot! Peel it off and give everything a good stir. This helps it cook evenly. Now, sprinkle the last of your cheddar cheese over the top. Pop it back in the oven, without the foil this time. Bake until the edges are bubbly and joyful. The center should be just set, not jiggy.

Step 4: Last step! Turn your oven to broil. Watch it closely. Broil just until the top gets those perfect golden-brown spots. It only takes a minute or two. Now, the hardest part. Let it rest on the counter for 25 minutes. This lets the sauce settle and become perfect. I know it's tempting to dig right in!

Cook Time: About 50 minutes

Total Time: About 1 hour 20 minutes

Yield: 6 servings

Category: Dinner, Side Dish

Three Fun Twists to Try

This recipe is like a blank canvas. You can paint it with so many flavors! Here are my favorite little changes. They make it feel brand new.

- **Autumn Harvest:** Stir in a cup of cubed butternut squash before baking. It gets so sweet and tender.
- **Everything's Better with Bacon:** Crumble four cooked bacon slices into the cheese and macaroni mix. So smoky and good.
- **Garden Herb Delight:** Add a big handful of fresh chopped chives and parsley. It makes it taste so fresh and green.

See also Midnight Mint Chocolate Crisps

Which one would you try first? Comment below!

Serving It Up Just Right

This bake is rich and wonderful. I like to balance it with something simple. A crisp green salad with a tangy vinaigrette is perfect. Buttered peas or roasted broccoli are lovely too. For a garnish, a sprinkle of paprika adds a pretty color.

What to drink? For the grown-ups, a chilled cider or a light lager cuts through the richness beautifully. For everyone, I love fizzy apple juice or a tall glass of cold milk. It reminds me of childhood lunches. **Which would you choose tonight?**



Festive Mac and Cheese Bake

Keeping Your Mac and Cheese Cozy

Let's talk about storing this lovely bake. First, let it cool completely. Cover the dish tightly with foil. It will keep in the fridge for three days. You can also freeze it for one month. Wrap it well in plastic wrap first.

To reheat, thaw it overnight if frozen. Add a splash of milk to keep it creamy. Cover it and warm it in a 350-degree oven. I once reheated it without that extra milk. The cheese sauce was a bit too thick for my liking.

Batch cooking matters for busy weeks. Making two dishes saves you time later. One for now, one for a future easy dinner. It turns a cooking day into a gift for your future self. **Have you ever tried storing it this way? Share below!**

Simple Fixes for Common Hiccups

Sometimes our bakes need a little help. First, a dry mac and cheese is sad. The fix is simple. Just whisk the cream and cornstarch well. This makes a smooth, rich sauce that bakes up perfectly.

Second, the top might not brown nicely. Your broiler needs to be very hot. Move your rack up close, just like the recipe says. I remember when my broiler was too cold. The cheese just melted sadly without browning.

Third, the center might be too wobbly. Let it rest the full 25 minutes. This lets the eggs finish setting up. Getting these steps right builds your cooking confidence. It also makes sure every bite is full of flavor. **Which of these problems have you run into before?**

Your Mac and Cheese Questions, Answered

Q: Can I make this gluten-free? A: Yes! Use your favorite gluten-free pasta. The sauce ingredients are already gluten-free.

See also Pumpkin Spice Noel Pudding

Q: Can I make it ahead? A: You can mix everything the night before. Keep it covered in the fridge. Bake it the next day.

Q: What cheese can I swap? A: Gouda or Monterey Jack work well.
Fun fact: American cheese helps create a super smooth sauce!

Q: Can I double the recipe? A: Absolutely. Use a 9×13 inch dish. You may need to bake it a little longer.

Q: Any optional tips? A: Try a breadcrumb topping for extra crunch. Mix panko with a little melted butter. Sprinkle it on before broiling.

Which tip will you try first?

From My Kitchen to Yours

I hope you love making this cozy dish. It is perfect for sharing with family. The best meals are made with a pinch of love. I would love to see your creation.

Please share a photo of your golden, bubbly bake. It makes my day to see your kitchen adventures. **Have you tried this recipe? Tag us on Pinterest!** Thank you for cooking with me today.

Happy cooking!
—Elowen Thorn.



FESTIVE MAC AND CHEESE BAKE

Festive Mac and Cheese Bake





[Print Recipe](#)

Festive Mac and Cheese Bake

Author: Elowen Thorn

Cooking Method: [Baking](#) [Broiling](#)

Cuisine: [American](#)



Courses: [Lunch](#) [Main](#) [Side](#)

Difficulty: **Beginner**

Prep time: **15 minutes**



Festive Mac and Cheese Bake | 20

Cook time: **47 minutes**

Rest time: **25 minutes**



Total time: **1 hour 27 minutes**



Servings: **6 servings**

Calories:**580 kcal**

Best Season: **Summer**

Description

A rich, creamy, and ultra-cheesy baked macaroni and cheese with a

perfectly browned, festive top.

Ingredients

- ☐ 8 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, shredded (2 cups), divided
- ☐ 4 ounces American cheese, shredded (1 cup)
- ☐ 4 teaspoons cornstarch, divided
- ☐ 8 ounces (2 cups) elbow macaroni
- ☐ 1 cup heavy cream
- ☐ 2 cups water
- ☐ 2 large eggs
- ☐ 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- ☐ 2 teaspoons hot sauce
- ☐ 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- ☐ ½ teaspoon table salt
- ☐ ½ teaspoon pepper

Instructions

1. Adjust oven rack 6 inches from broiler element and heat oven to 400 degrees. Toss 4 ounces cheddar, American cheese, and 2 teaspoons cornstarch together in bowl. Add macaroni, toss to combine, and transfer mixture to broiler-safe 8-inch square baking dish.
2. Whisk cream and remaining 2 teaspoons cornstarch together in now-empty bowl until cornstarch is dissolved. Whisk in water, eggs, mustard, hot sauce, Worcestershire, salt, and pepper until fully combined. Pour cream mixture over macaroni mixture in dish. Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 30 minutes.
3. Remove dish from oven and discard foil. Stir to redistribute macaroni. Sprinkle with remaining 4 ounces cheddar. Return dish to

oven and continue to bake until edges are bubbling and just set and center registers 150 to 160 degrees, about 15 minutes.

4. Turn on broiler. Broil until top of casserole is spotty brown, about 2 minutes. Let rest on wire rack for 25 minutes. Serve.

Notes

For a crispier top, let the dish rest uncovered for the full 25 minutes before serving. You can substitute the hot sauce with a pinch of cayenne pepper for a different kind of heat.

Keywords: Mac and Cheese, Cheddar, American Cheese, Comfort Food, Bake