

Mac N Cheese Not Just for Kids Anymore

More than 75% of adults LOVE mac and cheese! Traditionally thought of as a food only for children, macaroni and cheese is getting a makeover with flavorful regional twists and is being offered as an adult entrée on menus across the country. From bold Cajun flavors to authentic Southwest ingredients, Chef Lisa Schroeder knows how to turn a childhood treat into a grown-up favorite and features a different mac and cheese dish daily at Mother's Bistro and Bar in Portland, Ore.

To bring this tasty trend to their dinner tables, Schroeder offers these easy tips:

More Cheese, Please -- Use robust cheeses such as Blue and smoked Gouda and ingredients like fresh ground pepper, roasted garlic and chili paste to punch up your dishes.

Switch it Up -- Macaroni is just a generic term for pasta, so change it up! Add your family's favorite pasta shapes such as elbow, penne, rotini or farfalle.

Macaroni Savvy – Adding chorizo sausage, Prosciutto or roasted chicken makes mac and cheese a hearty meal when served with a salad or soup.

Visit ilovecheese.com for more cheese tips, along with savory cheese recipes and easy entertaining ideas.

CAJUN MACARONI AND CHEESE WITH ANDOUILLE SAUSAGE

*Recipe courtesy of Chef Lisa Schroeder, Mother's Bistro and Bar, Portland, Ore.,
on behalf of the American Dairy Association*

Makes 6 servings

Prep time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 20 minutes

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup onions, finely diced
- 1/2 cup peppers, finely diced (preferably a mixture of yellow, green and red)
- 1 cup (6 ounces) andouille sausage, cut into 1/4-inch half moons
- 3 3/4 cups (1 quart) heavy cream, reduced to 3 1/2 cups*
- 2 cups (1/2 pound) sharp Cheddar cheese, shredded
- 3/4 teaspoon salt, to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 1 pound spiral or other pasta, cooked in plenty of salted water according to package directions and drained
- 1/4 cup green onions, including green part, sliced thin for garnish

*To reduce cream: Place in a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan and bring to a boil. Boil cream about 10 minutes and skim top before adding to recipe. Watch carefully as cream may boil up suddenly.

In a large sauté pan over high heat, add butter (don't wait for it to melt or it will burn), onions and peppers and sauté until vegetables begin to soften. Add andouille sausage and continue to cook over high heat until the vegetables begin to turn golden and the sausage begins to color. Lower heat and continue to sauté until the vegetables are very soft, about 4 minutes.

Add reduced heavy cream and bring to a boil over high heat. Lower heat to medium-high and continue to simmer, about 5 minutes.

Add cheese and stir well with a wooden spoon until the cheese is well melted. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Continue to simmer another 3 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Toss in cooked, drained pasta and mix well. To serve, garnish with finely sliced green onions.