

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.

SOUTHWEST MAC AND JACK

*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: 25 minutes

Cook time: 15 minutes

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup onions, finely diced
- 1/2 cup bell peppers, finely diced (preferably a mixture of yellow, green and red)
- 1 jalapeño pepper, seeds removed, diced (optional)
- 3 3/4 cups (1 quart) heavy cream, reduced to 3 1/2 cups*
- 2 cups (1/2 pound) Pepper Jack or Monterey Jack cheese, shredded
- 1 cup leftover roasted or boiled chicken, shredded
- 3/4 teaspoon salt, to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 1 pound penne or other pasta, cooked in plenty of salted water according to package directions and drained
- 1/4 cup chipotle sour cream (recipe below) or regular sour cream
- 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 and turn golden. Lower heat to medium and continue to cook 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 until the cheese is completely melted. Add shredded chicken and stir with a wooden spoon to combine. 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, top with a dollop of chipotle or regular sour cream and garnish with finely sliced green onions.