

COMFORT FOOD: MACARONI AND CHEESE

Contributed by Sandra Lewis
Thu, Feb 22, 2007, 11:59 AM

As comfort food and cheese goes it doesn't get any better than macaroni and cheese.

I've been on the hunt this past year for the ultimate macaroni and cheese recipe excluding the boxed stuff.

I've tried several recipes on my quest, some with this and that special cheese; one recipe had three special cheeses.

I settled on this recipe even though I wouldn't describe it as the ultimate; it's a simple cheddar cheese recipe, but my girls get happy every time I make it.

And that makes me happy.

It takes no longer to assemble this than it does the boxed stuff and while it bakes you can prepare the rest of your dinner.

Like any other bad habit, please tell me you'll give up your Kraft Macaroni and Cheese addiction (or any other brand of boxed macaroni and cheese). Kraft introduced its macaroni and cheese product at a time when the country was rationing dairy products. How much real cheese do you think is in that packet of orange powder?

My oldest daughter, Ariel, whipped out the meal pictured below - baked chicken, macaroni and cheese, green peas spiced with butter and cayenne (I know it sounds crazy, but it was good!), and garlic bread.

Total comfort.

I could use some comfort right about now.

As I write I'm at 36,000 feet somewhere over Utah on my way to San Francisco with a chronic sneezer and the loudest nose blower on the planet stationed in the row behind me. I can't get off this plane fast enough.

Maybe I'll search out some macaroni and cheese while I'm here.

Golden Brown Macaroni and Cheese

6 cups water

1/2 teaspoon salt

2 cups uncooked elbow macaroni

4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) butter

2 1/2 cups grated mild Cheddar cheese

2 large eggs

1/2 cup milk

paprika, for the top

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease an 8-inch square baking pan. In a 6-quart pot, bring the water and salt to a boil. Add the macaroni and cook for 7 minutes, stirring occasionally. Drain. Return the macaroni to the pot and stir in the butter until melted. Add 2 cups of the cheddar cheese.

In a medium bowl, beat the eggs. Beat in the milk. Add the milk mixture to the pot with the macaroni. Stir until combined. Spoon into prepared pan. Sprinkle the remaining 1/2 cup cheddar cheese on top. Dust with paprika. Bake uncovered for 30 minutes or until cheese has melted and the casserole is warm throughout.

Makes 5 to 6 servings as a side dish.

Sandra's Cooking Notes:

- I found this recipe on the Internet somewhere. The author is Mattie Wilson in a book called "Sylvia's Family Sould Food Cookbook." Thanks, Mattie.

- Sometimes I use sharp cheddar cheese for a different twist.