GENERAL

san giorgio macaroni and cheese recipe

Published: September 3, 2026 | Index ID: #-

San Giorgio Macaroni and Cheese Recipe: A Classic Comfort Food with a Modern Twist

There's a reason that macaroni and cheese is a staple in kitchens across the globe: it's warm, creamy, and utterly comforting. But not all mac & cheese recipes are created equal. The San Giorgio macaroni and cheese recipe elevates this timeless dish with a blend of premium cheeses, a secret blend of spices, and a crisp, golden breadcrumb topping that turns a humble comfort food into a show stopper. Whether you're a seasoned chef or a kitchen novice, this guide will walk you through every step—from selecting the perfect pasta to achieving the perfect melt.

Why San Giorgio? A Brief History of the Classic

The San Giorgio name carries a heritage of culinary craftsmanship. Originating in the heart of Italy, "San Giorgio" was originally a family recipe that made its way into the American culinary scene in the late 20th century. The recipe was refined over decades, combining Italian cheese-making traditions with American comfort food sensibilities. Today, the San Giorgio macaroni and cheese recipe is celebrated for its balance of creamy richness and a subtle peppery kick, making it a favorite at family gatherings, holiday feasts, and cozy weekend dinners.

Key Ingredients: Quality Makes the Difference

Choosing the right ingredients is essential for achieving that signature San Giorgio flavor. Below is a breakdown of the core components and why each matters.

- Pasta: Elbow macaroni is the traditional choice. It holds sauce well and has the perfect bite.
- Cheese Blend: The recipe calls for a combination of sharp cheddar, Gruyère, and a touch of fontina. This blend gives depth and a smooth melt.
- Milk and Cream: A mix of whole milk and heavy cream creates a velvety sauce without being overly heavy.
- Butter and Flour: The roux base ensures the sauce thickens evenly.
- Spices: A pinch of smoked paprika, a dash of mustard powder, and a hint of cayenne pepper add complexity.
- Bread Crumbs: For the topping, use panko or a homemade breadcrumb mixture for a crunchy finish.
- Optional Add-Ins: Bacon, sautéed mushrooms, or roasted tomatoes can elevate the dish further.

Step by Step Guide to the San Giorgio Macaroni and Cheese Recipe

1. Gather Your Equipment

Before you dive into cooking, make sure you have the following tools ready:

- Large pot for boiling pasta
- Strainer
- Saucepan for sauce preparation
- Wooden spoon or silicone spatula
- Baking dish (9x13 inches works well)
- Measuring cups and spoons

- Cheese grater or food processor

2. Cook the Pasta to Al Dente

Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil. Add the elbow macaroni and cook for 7–8 minutes, or until al dente. Stir occasionally to prevent sticking. Once done, drain the pasta and set aside. Don’t rinse; the starches help the sauce cling to the noodles.

3. Create the Cheese Sauce

In a medium saucepan, melt 3 tablespoons of butter over medium heat. Once the butter has foamed, add 3 tablespoons of all purpose flour. Whisk continuously for about 1–2 minutes to form a roux—this should be a pale golden color and smell slightly nutty.

Gradually pour in 2 cups of whole milk and 1 cup of heavy cream while whisking. Keep the mixture smooth; add the liquids in a steady stream to avoid lumps. Allow the sauce to simmer for 3–4 minutes, stirring frequently until it thickens.

Remove the saucepan from heat and add the cheese blend: 1 cup of sharp cheddar, 1 cup of Gruyère, and ½ cup of fontina. Stir until the cheeses are fully melted and the sauce is silky. Season with ½ teaspoon of smoked paprika, ¼ teaspoon of mustard powder, and a pinch of cayenne pepper. Taste and adjust with salt and black pepper as needed.

4. Combine Pasta and Sauce

Return the drained pasta to the pot or a large mixing bowl. Pour the hot cheese sauce over the pasta, using a spoon or spatula to coat each noodle evenly. If the sauce seems thick, add a splash of milk to reach your desired consistency.

5. Prepare the Topping

In a small bowl, mix 1 cup of panko breadcrumbs with 2 tablespoons of melted butter, 2 tablespoons of grated Parmesan, and 1 teaspoon of dried Italian herbs. This mixture will create a crisp, flavorful crust when baked.

6. Assemble and Bake

Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C). Grease a 9x13 inch baking dish with a little butter or cooking spray. Transfer the pasta and cheese mixture into the dish, spreading it out evenly.

Evenly sprinkle the breadcrumb mixture over the top. For an extra golden finish, you can lightly drizzle a bit more melted butter over the breadcrumbs.

Bake in the preheated oven for 25–30 minutes, or until the top is golden brown and the edges are bubbling. If you prefer a crunchier top, bake for an additional 2–3 minutes.

7. Rest, Serve, and Enjoy

Let the dish rest for 5 minutes after removing it from the oven. This allows the sauce to set, making it easier to cut into portions. Serve hot, optionally garnished with fresh parsley or a sprinkle of extra grated cheese.

Variations to Tailor the San Giorgio Macaroni and Cheese to Your Taste

1. Vegan San Giorgio Macaroni and Cheese

Swap dairy for plant-based alternatives: use a non dairy butter, oat or soy milk, and a vegan cheese blend. Nutritional yeast can replace Parmesan for a cheesy flavor.

2. Protein Packed Version

Add cooked, shredded chicken, or sautéed ground beef to the pasta before baking. This turns the dish into a hearty main course.

3. Spicy Kick

Increase the cayenne pepper to ½ teaspoon or add a tablespoon of finely chopped jalapeños to the sauce for a fiery twist.

4. Veggie Boost

Stir in sautéed spinach, roasted bell peppers, or caramelized onions to add color, flavor, and nutrients.

Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

- Overcooking the Pasta: Pasta that's too soft can break apart and produce a mushy sauce. Aim for al dente.
- Lumpy Sauce: A slow, steady whisk while adding liquids prevents lumps. Using a fine mesh sieve can help if lumps still form.
- Burnt Topping: Keep an eye on the breadcrumb layer; if it browns too quickly, lower the oven temperature or cover loosely with foil.
- Dry Cheese Layer: Ensure the sauce isn't too thick. Adding a splash of milk or cream before baking can keep it moist.

Nutritional Snapshot

Per serving (based on 8 servings):

- Calories: ~420 kcal
- Protein: 20 g
- Fat: 25 g (9 g saturated)
- Carbohydrates: 35 g (5 g fiber)
- Sodium: 650 mg

These values can vary based on ingredient substitutions and portion sizes.

Serving Suggestions and Pairings

The San Giorgio macaroni and cheese recipe pairs wonderfully with a crisp green salad, roasted vegetables, or a light soup. A glass of chilled white wine, such as Chardonnay or Sauvignon Blanc, complements the creamy richness. For a festive touch, serve with a side of garlic bread or a simple pan fried shrimp.

Storage and Reheating Tips

Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. Reheat in the oven at 350°F (175°C) for 15 minutes, or in a microwave on medium power for 2–3 minutes, stirring halfway through. For best results, add a splash of milk or cream when reheating to restore creaminess.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I use different pasta shapes?

Absolutely! While elbow macaroni is traditional, you can experiment with shells, penne, or even fusilli. Just adjust the cooking time accordingly.

What if I don’t have Gruyère or fontina?

Sharp cheddar is a solid substitute, but mixing cheddar with a mild mozzarella or a bit of provolone will mimic the meltiness and flavor profile.

Is it possible to make this dish ahead of time?

Yes. Assemble the dish, cover, and refrigerate. Bake directly from the refrigerator, adding an extra 5–10 minutes to the baking time.

Conclusion

The San Giorgio macaroni and cheese recipe is more than just a comfort dish; it’s a celebration of cheese, technique, and flavor. By selecting high quality ingredients, mastering the roux, and finishing with a golden breadcrumb crust, you can create a dish that feels indulgent yet approachable. Whether you’re feeding a crowd or treating yourself to a cozy night in, this recipe offers a reliable, delicious solution that will keep your taste buds coming back for more. Grab your apron, gather your ingredients, and let the magic of San Giorgio transform ordinary pasta into a memorable culinary experience.

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