

Cheese with a side of macaroni

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As fall approaches and flip flops, beach towels and picnic baskets are stored for months, it's time to dust off comfort food recipes as lazy days are replaced with demanding schedules to juggle.

At the top of my favorites is my mother's 52-year-old recipe for macaroni and cheese. Her recipe is best described as cheese with a side of elbow pasta. Requiring one pot and one baking dish, the ease of preparation is complemented by the bread crumb topping with sweet paprika to finish.

If it's been a full day of errands with no dinner menu in mind, a last-minute meal request for a friend or a tailgate party, cheese with macaroni is an undeniable comfort food favorite.

As you transition into a new season, serve a vintage recipe that might rekindle your favorite childhood combination. Main dish or side, if you like your macaroni cheesy, this is made to order.

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Cheese and Macaroni

Serves: 4-6

2 cups large, dry elbow pasta/macaroni

1 (12 oz.) can evaporated milk, shake well before opening

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Salt and pepper to taste

1 block (1½ pounds) or 6 cups sharp cheddar cheese, grated

paprika to taste

¼ cup seasoned bread crumbs

Preheat oven to 325.

Cook macaroni in salted water according to directions on package, then drain well and let pasta cool for 2-3 minutes. Turn stove top off.

Return macaroni back into the pot and stir in evaporated milk, and shredded cheese, adding cheese a cup at a time to incorporate well. Add salt and pepper to taste preference and blend thoroughly.

In small prep bowl, mix bread crumbs and paprika with fork, set aside.

Butter or spray a medium casserole or deep baking dish. Add in cheese and macaroni, spread evenly.

Carefully and evenly shake the bread crumb and paprika mixture to top.

Bake for 45 to 55 minutes, uncovered. The top should be bubbling on the edges and will be crispy and light brown. If you want less crunch, cover the baking dish with lid or foil.

— "Mormon Mama Italian Cookbook," by Shannon M. Smurthwaite

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