

OVEN-BAKED MAC & CHEESE

INGREDIENTS

1 pound rotini pasta (I use rotini, but you could of course use macaroni)
6 tablespoons unsalted butter
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
4 cups half-and-half
1 cup low-sodium chicken broth
4 cups shredded mild cheddar cheese
2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
3 cups panko bread crumbs
1/2 cup grated parmesan
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled
Salt and pepper

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400F.

Bring water to boil in large Dutch oven over high heat. Stir in 1 tablespoon salt and the rotini and cook until just al dente, about 7 minutes. Drain pasta and return to pot to keep warm.

Meanwhile, melt butter in medium saucepan over medium heat until foaming. Stir in flour and cayenne and cook until golden, about 1 minute. Slowly whisk in half-and-half and broth until smooth. Bring to boil, reduce heat to medium, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until mixture is slightly thickened, about 15 minutes. Off heat, whisk in cheeses, 1 teaspoon salt, and 1 teaspoon pepper until cheeses melt. Pour sauce over macaroni and stir to combine.

In a mixing bowl, combine panko and grated parmesan cheese. Melt butter and pour to bread crumb parmesan mixture and mix gently but thoroughly.

Scrape pasta mixture into 13 by 9-inch baking dish set in rimmed baking sheet. Sprinkle on breadcrumbs and bake until top begins to brown, 15 to 20 minutes (be careful not to let the breadcrumbs get too dark). Let sit for 10 to 15 minutes before serving.