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Mac 'n' Cheese

By Allison Rivers Samson



MMMM... MACARONI AND CHEESE.

Everyone's favorite comfort food is traditionally loaded with butter, cheese, cream, and more butter. While I've sampled several vegan recipes, none have really done it for me the way this one does. This updated version tastes rich and creamy, and has the perfect mouth-feel and depth of flavor, minus oodles of cholesterol and saturated fat. Serve up a bowl of this deliciously decadent casserole, snuggle-up by a fire, and prepare yourself for vegan nirvana.

Baked Macaroni & Cheese

A transformed version with a super-rich vegan cheese sauce makes this mac 'n' cheese the ultimate comfort food.

Serves 6

- 4 quarts water
- 1 tablespoon sea salt
- 8 ounces macaroni
- 4 slices of bread, torn into large pieces
- 2 tablespoons + 1/3 cup non-hydrogenated margarine
- 2 tablespoons shallots, peeled and chopped
- 1 cup red or yellow potatoes, peeled and chopped
- 1/4 cup carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1/3 cup onion, peeled and chopped
- 1 cup water
- 1/4 cup raw cashews
- 2 teaspoons sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic, minced
- 1/4 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice, freshly squeezed

- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika

1. In a large pot, bring the water and salt to a boil. Add macaroni and cook until al dente. In a colander, drain pasta and rinse with cold water. Set aside.

2. In a food processor, make breadcrumbs by pulverizing the bread and 2 tablespoons margarine to a medium-fine texture. Set aside.

3. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a saucepan, add shallots, potatoes, carrots, onion, and water, and bring to a boil. Cover the pan and simmer for 15 minutes, or until vegetables are very soft.

4. In a blender, process the cashews, salt, garlic, 1/3 cup margarine, mustard, lemon juice, black pepper, and cayenne. Add softened vegetables and cooking water to the blender and process until perfectly smooth.

5. In a large bowl, toss the cooked pasta and blended cheese sauce until completely coated. Spread mixture into a 9 x 12 casserole dish, sprinkle with prepared breadcrumbs, and dust with paprika. Bake for 30 minutes or until the cheese sauce is bubbling and the top has turned golden brown. **VN**

Allison Rivers Samson is the owner of Allison's Gourmet, an online, organic, artisan bakery and gift shop. This is her debut column in VegNews Magazine.

Chef's Tip:

Enjoy this mac 'n' cheese with freshly steamed broccoli and a glass of vegan Pinot Noir or Sangiovese.