

# ALEX'S MAC & CHEESE

In previous blog posts, I've mentioned how delighted I am that the next generation in our family is getting comfortable behind the stove. My young cousin Alex is a man of particular tastes, but when he finds something he loves, he likes to master it. He's always been a big fan of pasta and cheese and it was only a matter of time before he found his perfect Mac and cheese recipe. I loved watching him make this dish and hearing his preferences on texture, cheese types and what definitely should not be included.

This is the perfect type of dish that can be improvised based on your own preferences. If you're a blue cheese nut, then go for it. If you're more of a pulled pork kind of person, then throw that in too. This dish is so evil, you might as well go for broke.

## **INGREDIENTS (Serves 8)**

1 head of garlic ( $\frac{1}{2}$  to use with this dish,  $\frac{1}{2}$  to reserve for other dishes)

3 tablespoons olive oil

4 tablespoons of butter

4 tablespoons of flour

2 cups of milk

$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt

$\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon black pepper

6 strips bacon or turkey bacon

1 cup grated parmesan cheese (large grate)

2 cups grated cheddar cheese

2 cups grated gruyere

1 lb Cavatappi pasta or elbow macaroni

2 tablespoons chopped chives for garnish

### **PREPARATION**

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Place the head of garlic on its side and cut it in half. Place both halves on aluminum foil and pour olive oil over the cloves. Seal the foil around the garlic and place on baking sheet. Roast in the oven for 30 minutes. Allow to cool and squeeze out garlic cloves. Chop the garlic and set half aside for other uses.

In a medium sized pot, melt the butter on medium heat. Add the flour and combine until it is a blond roux. Slowly add the milk, a bit at a time, and whisk together. Bring to a low boil until it thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon, (about 10 minutes). Add the salt, pepper and half the garlic. Taste to see if more spices are needed. Don't over salt because cheese has a lot of salt on its own.

Cook the pasta as per boxed instructions. When al dente, strain out the water and set pasta aside.

Turn down the heat under the milk mixture and keep on a simmer. Add the Gruyère and cheddar and stir until melted. Add the bacon and pasta and stir. Add Parmesan cheese right before serving. Garnish with chives.

If you are like my cousin Alex and enjoy a creamier, cheesier texture, then your Mac and cheese is ready to eat. But if you prefer a nice crust on top or if you think there might be leftovers, then place the mixture in a 9 x 12 buttered pyrex dish and place in the oven to bake for ten to twenty minutes, depending upon how crispy you like your Mac and cheese.