

MARIACHI MAC AND CHEESE

SERVES 4 TO 6

THIS IS THE SAME GREAT BEECHER'S MAC AND CHEESE recipe taken to a new level, with the spice of chiles and the addition of vegetables. Feel free to experiment with left-over cheeses for new flavor combinations.

- 8 ounces penne
- 2 tablespoons (1/4 stick) unsalted butter
- 2 1/2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 9 ounces sharp Cheddar, grated (2 1/4 cups)
- 1 ounce Gruyère cheese, grated (1/4 cup)
- 2 1/2 teaspoons finely minced chipotle peppers in adobo sauce (about 1 pepper; see Note)
- 1 4-ounce can diced green chiles, rinsed, or 3 roasted Anaheim chiles
- 3/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 1/4 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 medium red onion, diced
- 1 cup cauliflower florets
- 1/2 medium red bell pepper, diced
- 1/2 cup fresh or frozen corn kernels
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Butter or oil an 8-inch baking dish. Cook the penne 2 minutes less than package directions. (It will finish cooking in the oven.) Rinse the pasta in cold water and set aside. In a heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter and whisk in the flour. Continue whisking and cook for 2 minutes. Slowly add the milk, whisking constantly. Cook until the sauce thickens, about 8 minutes, stirring frequently. Remove from the heat. Add three-quarters of the Cheddar, the Gruyère, chipotle pepper, green chiles, garlic powder, and salt. Stir until the cheese is melted. Set aside. In a medium skillet, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion, cauliflower, and bell pepper. Cook for 3 to 4 minutes, or until the onion is just beginning to brown. Remove from the heat and add the vegetables to the cheese sauce along with the corn. Fold the sauce into the cooked pasta. Pour the mixture into the prepared baking dish. Sprinkle with the remaining Cheddar cheese and the paprika. Bake, uncovered, for 35 minutes, or until golden brown and bubbly. Let the mac and cheese rest for 5 minutes before serving.

NOTE Chipotle peppers in adobo sauce come in 7-ounce cans and can be found at most grocery stores. The peppers are very soft and become a pulp when finely minced. They are also spicy, so to reduce the spice of the mac and cheese, add less chipotle. Store leftover chipotle peppers in the refrigerator.

MAKE AHEAD This dish can be assembled before baking and then frozen up to 3 months ahead—just be sure to use a freezer-to-oven pan and increase the baking time to 50 minutes.