

Mega Monster Mac and Cheese

Welcome to today's Sound Bite — it is Mega Monster Mac and Cheese!

We're going into half term so we'll have a healthy/not-healthy crowd-pleaser of a family meal. Healthy because it's got loads and loads of kale and spinach which makes it bright green but not healthy because it is essentially mac and cheese!

And it goes like this; you get a reasonably sized saucepan which is around three-quarters full and add a little bit of salt, pop the lid on and bring it up to the boil. Separately you get a mixing bowl with about 4 handfuls of ice and half-fill it with cold water. You give your kale a good old pick. You don't want any of the stalks because they won't blitz up nicely (you can feed those to be guinea pigs or put them in the compost). You just want nice frilly leaves. Once the pan of water is up at a boil, you put the kale into the water making sure it's submerged right underneath the water and set a timer for 3 minutes.

Once those 3 minutes have happened, the spinach goes in. Push that down with a utensil. It will only take a minute to wilt and once it is wilted you use a slotted spoon to pull it from the boiling water into the ice water. The point of that is it keeps that nice and green and stops the cooking immediately. That's the greens done!

Top the pan up with water (even though it looks a little murky). We're going to put the pasta in it so top it up to about three-quarters of the way. Add a few slugs of olive oil. Now, in a separate pan, we're going to make the cheese sauce.

Add butter to the pan. Chop your garlic and add to the butter once it's fizzling. Stir until the garlic is a nutty, golden colour. You don't want to rush this step- it may take a couple of minutes. Once it's done, add the flour, and turn the heat right down because you want your roux to have that floury taste cooked right through — perhaps a couple of minutes.

By now your pot of water should have come back to a boil. Add your macaroni, giving it a vigorous stir so it doesn't stick together. Start your timer for whatever it says on the packet.

Your roux is now cooked out. Add in about a quarter of the milk. Use a wooden spoon at this stage and beat it into a paste. Once that's mixed in, you add 200ml more of milk and switch your weapon of choice to a balloon whisk and whisk until smooth. You then put the rest of the milk in and you whisk. Make sure the roux is smooth between batches.

Bring it up to a simmer, go back to your wooden spoon and once you see some bubbles, you turn it off and give it a little season with some pepper, not salt because it will get loads of this later as cheese is very salty.

Now, heat your oven to about 220° and prep yourself a tray with some lined foil. This is to avoid any dripping in the oven. Choose your cooking vessel for your Mac and Cheese- it needs to be big.

You've got your pasta and you now go back to the greens. You take them out of the ice water and squeeze into handfuls of little green balls (getting the water out of them). You put them straight into a blender or food processor and throw the water away once your balls are in your machine. Add about 4 tablespoons of water just to make sure it moves around and blends as you want a blended puree. Add a little more water if necessary.

You will have grated your cheddar, add this to your white sauce with a bit of nutmeg- classic french. Have a taste of your cheese sauce, yummy yummy. Your pinger should be going off for your pasta. Drain that and put it back into the pot. Stir in the cheese sauce.

Stir through the green puree- making it into a monster!

You're going to blend up the remains of your ingredients — your breadcrumbs and your parmesan (that's been grated with the little holes). Mix that all together and add a little oil. Have a final taste of your Mac and Cheese. Add some more pepper or nutmeg or a little bit of salt if you fancy and then load it into your baking vessel. Sprinkle the crust on top and it goes into the oven for about 12 minutes on the top shelf.

You don't want it to cook long you just want to get the top nice and gratinated

Let it cool down for 5 minutes and there you have it. Your mega monster mac and cheese.

I hope you enjoy it!