

Crock Pot Mac and Cheese

Mac and cheese= kid favorite, adult favorite, crowd pleaser. Unless you are lactose intolerant, I'm guessing mac and cheese is a staple in your diet and probably gives you warm fuzzies of memories as a kid. Whether you liked the stove top blue box, orange carton that went in the oven or something homemade with buttery crumbles on top, cheese and noodles are a great combination.

Noodles are a challenge for the crock pot, however. I would recommend cooking the noodles in advance. I know it makes TWO pots to clean instead of just one, but it's the best way. You can reuse the pot to make the sauce before pouring it into the crock pot. You may be saying, but then isn't this a stove top recipe and not a crock pot recipe? But by adding these things together into the crock pot, you are actually working to increase the creaminess, less the seasoning melt together and ultimately have dinner ready when you get home.

I also would recommend shredding the block of cheese by hand instead of buying preshredded cheese. It makes it a little creamier, although I'm not quite sure why. But if you cook the noodles in advance and shred the cheese too, you are eliminating some of the prep time to make it easier to start this dish over breakfast and then enjoy it at dinner time.

Once this becomes one of your favorite dishes, there are lots of ways to add variety: add 1/2 c salsa or 4 strips of crumbled bacon or freshly snipped chives or some steamed vegetables like broccoli or peas. If you want more protein in the dish, add a packet of drained tuna fish or some fajita-style chicken strips. If you are serving this to adults and want to make it more grown up, try different shape noodles instead of the traditional shell or elbow macaroni. However you make it, I hope this becomes one of your favorite recipes

too and helps to make new warm fuzzies for you, your friends and your family.

8 oz pasta, cooked and drained (try shells or elbow macaroni if you want to be traditional)

4 T. butter

4 T. flour

1/2 cup half and half creamer

1 c. milk

1 egg, beaten

8 oz sharp cheddar cheese, shredded

8 oz. mild cheddar cheese, shredded

1 t. white pepper

PINCH of nutmeg (just a weeeee bit)

4 oz. whipped cream cheese

Cook the package of noodles according to the box, this step can be done in advance and should not be done in the crock pot. On the stove, melt the butter in a pot, then slowly stir in the flour until it is all dissolved. Slowly add the creamer, milk, beaten egg and seasonings while still continuing to stir and then remove pot from heat. This mixture should thicken. Now for the crock potting instructions— first, spray pot with non-stick spray. Add noodles, creamy mixture from pot and then the shredded cheeses. Mix this all together. Then, cook on low for 4 hours. About an hour before you want to serve this, add the whipped cream cheese and stir it all together. This last step adds a special creaminess to your mac and cheese.