

Butternut Squash Mac & Cheese w/ Calabrian Chili Sage Breadcrumbs

By Alessandra Ciuffo

Ingredients:

- 1 medium butternut squash, peeled and small diced (about 4 cups)
- 1 head garlic, top removed exposing cloves
- ½ cup veggie or chicken stock
- 8 oz Sharp Cheddar cheese, freshly grated (about 2.5 cups)
- 6 oz Gruyere cheese, freshly grated (about 2 cups)
- 1 cup Parmigiano cheese, freshly grated
- 4 tbsp butter, divided
- 2 tbsp flour
- 3 cups milk
- Nutmeg
- 1 lb pasta of choice, mine is fusilli corti bucati
- Fresh sage
- 2 tsp Calabrian chili peppers in oil, or to taste
- 1 cup panko breadcrumbs
- Olive oil
- Salt & pepper to taste

Steps:

- 1) Preheat the oven to 400 F. Add the peeled and cut squash onto a sheet tray along with a head of garlic placed cut side down. Drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Roast for 25-30 minutes, until cooked through and golden brown. Reserve half of the cubed squash to the side, and add the other half to a blender along with the squeezed-out roasted garlic and stock. Blend until smooth.
- 2) In the meantime, grate your cheeses and get started on the sauce. Bring two pots to the stove. In one, add the milk over low heat and allow to simmer. In the other, melt 2 tbsp of butter over medium-low heat. Once melted, stir in the flour to form a rye. Cook for 2 minutes, then begin adding the milk one ladle at a time, stirring well to incorporate each time. Continue to cook for 10-15 minutes, stirring frequently. Season with salt and freshly grated nutmeg. Stir in the butternut squash puree.
- 3) Combine your three grated cheeses and divide them into two. Add half into the pot with the milk rye in batches until well combined. At the same time, cook your pasta in salted boiling water for 2 minutes under al dente. Once done, add the pasta to the pot with the cheese sauce and the reserved cubed squash. Toss well to coat, then transfer half into a baking dish, add half of the remaining cheese, add the rest of the pasta and then finish with the remaining cheese. Place the tray into a 375 F oven for 25-30 minutes.
- 4) Melt the remaining 2 tbsp butter in a small skillet over medium heat. Add the fresh sage and fry until crisp, then remove and add in the calabrian chilis along with the panko. Toss to coat and cook for 2-3 minutes until toasted. Season with salt and set aside to cool.

- 5) Top the finished mac and cheese with the panko topping and pop back into the oven for 5 minutes.

ENJOY!!