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Recipes from The Bacon Cookbook by James Villas. Published by John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ. Copyright 2007. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

Swiss Macaroni, Bacon, and Cheese
(Makes 4 servings)

When I first sampled this Swiss specialty in the Alps above Lucerne, it was prepared with half macaroni, half cubed potatoes, Emmentaler cheese, and a salty, rugged mountain bacon that tasted like country ham. Then, later, after visiting a Gruyère cheese maker in the canton of Fribourg, some friends and I were treated to basically the same dish at a chalet-restaurant, the differences being that only macaroni was used, the smoky bacon was much like our streaky style, and, of course, the cheese was a buttery, nutty Gruyère. Topped with golden onions and served with only some cinnamon apple wedges sautéed in butter and a very tart green salad, it was one of the greatest pasta dishes I've ever encountered and almost made a mockery of ordinary mac'n'cheese.

Salt to taste
1 pound dried elbow macaroni
6 ounces streaky bacon slices, cut into small pieces
4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) butter
1 cup heavy cream
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
Grated nutmeg to taste
4 ounces Gruyère or Emmentaler cheese, grated
1 medium onion, thinly sliced

Bring a large kettle of salted water to a boil, add the macaroni, return to the boil, and cook till *al dente*, about 10 minutes. Drain.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Butter a 2-to2½-quart baking dish and set aside.

In a large, deep skillet, fry the bacon over moderate heat till almost crisp, drain off all but 1 tablespoon of fat, and add 2 tablespoons of the butter to the fat. Add the cream, pepper, and nutmeg and stir well. Add the cooked macaroni and the cheese and mix till well blended. Scrape the mixture into the prepared baking dish and bake till bubbly and golden, 10 to 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, melt the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter over moderately low heat in a small skillet, add the onion, and cook till golden, about 5 minutes. Scatter the onions over the top of the macaroni and serve hot.