

Lobster Mac and Cheese with a Crispy Shallot Herbed Crust

Serves 4 - 6

Elevating a classic dish always results in something to celebrate! This extra special lobster mac and cheese features nutty cheeses and sweet lobster. The combo creates a reliably, award-winning pasta bake. Indulgent, yet approachable, this dish deserves to be shared with those you love!

Ingredients:

1 lb cavatappi pasta	1 cup shredded parmesan cheese, plus 1/4 cup (roughly 4 oz)
1/2 lb large cold-water lobster tails, (about 4 lobster tails)	1-1/2 teaspoons Kosher salt
3/4 cup butter, melted, plus 4 tablespoons butter, divided	1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1 yellow onion, finely diced	1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
4 cloves garlic, minced	1 teaspoon paprika
6 tablespoons flour	1 teaspoon mustard powder
1/2 cup vegetable broth	1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
3 cups whole milk, room temperature	1/4 cup vegetable oil (for frying)
1/2 cup half-and-half, room temperature	2 shallots, peeled and thinly sliced into rings
4 cups shredded cheddar cheese, (roughly 12 oz)	1/2 cup Panko breadcrumbs
2 cups shredded Gruyère cheese, (roughly 6 oz)	Flat leaf parsley

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 450°F. Cut the just thawed lobster tails in half vertically (butterfly method). Place the tails on a baking sheet and brush them with 2 tablespoons melted butter. Bake the lobster tails for 10-15 minutes until the meat is firm and just opaque. Remove the lobster tails from the oven, and reduce the oven heat to 375°F. Remove the meat from the shells, and roughly cut the lobster tails into 1" pieces.
2. Bring a large pot of water to boil. Add a dose of salt and cook the pasta until al dente according to package instructions.
3. In a large saucepan over medium heat, melt 3/4 cup butter. Add the onion and cook for about 5 minutes, or until soft and translucent. Add the garlic and sauté for another 30 seconds. Add the flour into the butter, garlic, and onion mixture and continuously whisk for 3 minutes, or until barely golden. Gradually whisk in the broth.
4. While continuing to whisk, slowly add the milk and the half-and-half. Bring the mixture to a low simmer over medium heat and continue stirring and cooking until the sauce is thick and smooth. Remove the saucepan from heat and stir in the cheddar cheese, Gruyère, 1 cup parmesan, salt, pepper, cayenne, paprika, mustard powder, and nutmeg. Stir until the cheese melts and all ingredients are fully combined.
5. Gently stir in the cooked pasta and the lobster pieces. Transfer all to a greased 9 x 13 baking dish.
6. In a small saucepan, melt 2 tablespoons butter over low heat. Add the breadcrumbs and stir until well-coated with the butter and lightly toasted. Sprinkle the breadcrumbs and remaining parmesan cheese over the top of the pasta and bake until golden and bubbling, roughly 20-25 minutes.
7. While the lobster mac and cheese bakes, in a small saucepan over medium-high heat, heat the vegetable oil and shallots until the oil begins to bubble, about 5 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and cook for another 4-5 minutes, or until the shallots are golden brown. Use a slotted spoon to remove the shallots from the oil, and let them drain on a paper towel-lined plate. Chop the shallot into small pieces as needed.
8. Top the lobster mac and cheese with the crispy shallots and the flat leaf parsley. Serve immediately.