

Spicy Jalapeño Bacon Mac & Cheese Bake: The Ultimate Kick of Comfort Food

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OVEN
375°F

TIME
1 min

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INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb elbow macaroni ?
- 1/2 lb bacon, chopped ?
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese ?
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese ?
- 1/2 cup jalapeño peppers, chopped ?
- 1 cup milk ?
- 1 tbsp butter ?
- 2 tbsp flour ?
- 1 tsp garlic powder ?
- Salt and pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook the pasta: Boil macaroni according to package directions until al dente. Drain and set aside.
2. Cook the bacon: In a large skillet or saucepan, cook chopped bacon until crispy. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside. Leave a little bacon grease in the pan for extra flavor.
3. Make the roux: Add butter to the same pan. Once melted, whisk in flour and cook for 1 minute to form a roux.
4. Add the milk: Gradually whisk in the milk, stirring constantly until the mixture thickens.
5. Build the cheese sauce: Add garlic powder, salt, pepper, jalapeños, cheddar, and mozzarella. Stir until smooth and creamy.
6. Combine: Fold the cooked pasta and bacon into the cheese sauce until everything is well coated.
7. Bake it: Transfer to a greased baking dish. Bake at 375°F (190°C) for 20 minutes, or until bubbly and golden on top.
8. Serve hot: Garnish with extra jalapeño slices or fresh herbs (like chives or parsley) if you like!

SWAPS & NOTES

Pasta: Any short pasta like cavatappi, rotini, or shells work great.

Cheese: Try pepper jack for more heat, or smoked gouda for depth.

Jalapeños: Use fresh for crunch, or jarred for more bite and acidity.

Milk: Whole milk makes for the creamiest sauce, but 2% works too.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Shred your own cheese for better melting and smoother sauce (bagged cheese has anti-caking agents).

It's key to thickening the cheese sauce and giving it that silky texture.

Mix panko with a tablespoon of melted butter and sprinkle it on before baking.

Control the heat by adjusting how many jalapeños you use and whether you include the seeds.

More recipes: [ChefManiac.com](https://chefmaniac.com)

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/spicy-jalapeno-bacon-mac-cheese-bake-the-ultimate-kick-of-comfort-food/>