

Guilt-Free Buffalo Chicken Mac: Deliciously Cheesy & Packed with Veggies

Who says comfort food can't be healthy? This



OVEN
425°F

TIME
12 to 16 min

TEMP
165°F

PRINT
Recipe Card

INGREDIENTS

- 12 oz fusilli or elbow pasta (use gluten-free if needed)
- 2 medium chicken breasts
- 1/3 cup medium buffalo sauce, more to taste
- 12 oz fresh broccoli florets (from one medium head)
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 Tbsp butter (or vegan butter)
- ... cup yellow onion, minced
- 2 Tbsp all-purpose flour (use gluten-free all-purpose flour if needed)
- 1 + 1/2 cups unsweetened almond milk
- 1 cup chicken broth (or vegetable broth for vegan)
- 2 cups shredded sharp cheddar, or vegan cheddar
- 1 tsp salt, more to taste
- 1 tsp black pepper

DIRECTIONS

- 1. Preheat : Oven & Prep Tray:** Preheat your oven to 425°F (220°C). Line and lightly grease a baking tray with parchment paper or cooking spray.
- 2. Cook : Pasta:** Cook the fusilli or elbow pasta according to package instructions until al dente. Once cooked, drain the pasta and rinse it with cold water. This step prevents the pasta from sticking together and stops the cooking process. Set the cooked pasta to the side.
- 3. Prepare : Buffalo Chicken:** Meanwhile, season the chicken breasts generously with salt and pepper. Place the seasoned chicken breasts in a large pot and cover them with about 1 inch of water. Bring the water to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Let the chicken cook until it reaches an internal temperature of 165°F (74°C) or is no longer pink in the center, typically about 12 to 16 minutes. Remove the cooked chicken from the water and use two forks to shred it into bite-sized pieces. Add the buffalo sauce to the shredded chicken and toss to coat evenly. Set the buffalo chicken aside.
- 4. Roast : Broccoli:** Meanwhile, prepare the medium-sized broccoli florets. Spray them with avocado oil (or drizzle with olive oil), and season with salt and pepper. Spread the seasoned broccoli in a single layer on the prepared baking tray. Roast in the preheated oven for 15 - 20 minutes, or until tender-crisp and slightly browned. Set the roasted broccoli aside when done.
- 5. Start : Cheese Sauce (Roux):** While the broccoli is roasting, place a large skillet or Dutch oven on the stovetop. Heat to medium heat and melt the 1 Tbsp

butter. Once melted, add the 2 Tbsp all-purpose flour and cook over low heat for 2 minutes, stirring constantly with a whisk. This creates a roux, which will thicken your sauce.

6. SautØ Onion: Add the minced yellow onion to the roux and cook for another 2 minutes, stirring until it softens and becomes translucent.
7. Whisk in : Liquids: Gradually add the chicken broth and unsweetened almond milk to the skillet, whisking continuously to prevent lumps. Add 1 tsp salt and 1 tsp black pepper. Increase the heat to medium-high and bring the mixture to a boil. Continue to cook for about 5 minutes, whisking constantly, until the sauce becomes smooth and thick enough to coat the back of a spoon.
8. Melt : Cheese: Once the sauce is thick, remove the skillet from the heat. Add the 2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese (or vegan cheddar) and mix vigorously with the whisk until the cheese is completely melted and incorporated, forming a smooth, creamy sauce. Taste the sauce and adjust salt and pepper to taste if needed.
9. Combine & : Serve: Add the cooked macaroni, roasted broccoli florets, and buffalo chicken into the cheese sauce. Stir everything gently until all ingredients are well combined and coated in the creamy sauce. Taste and adjust seasonings one final time.
10. Enjoy: Serve immediately and enjoy this healthy, hearty, and incredibly delicious Buffalo Chicken Mac and Cheese!

SWAPS & NOTES

while also being mindful of nutrition, and this Buffalo Chicken Mac and Cheese perfectly embodies that balance.

What I truly adore about this dish is how it manages to be incredibly comforting and indulgent, yet packed with vegetables and lean protein.

The fiery kick of the buffalo sauce, combined with the creamy, cheesy pasta and tender-crisp broccoli, creates an exciting medley of textures and tastes.

It's fantastic because it's a complete meal in one pot (mostly!), simplifying cleanup and making it ideal for busy schedules.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Shred Chicken Easily: Boiling and then shredding the chicken breasts with two forks is a quick and effective method.

Don't Overcook Pasta: Al dente pasta holds up better in the rich sauce and during reheating.

Roast Broccoli Separately: Roasting the broccoli before adding ensures it's tender-crisp and not soggy.

Whisk Constantly for Sauce: Continuous whisking is crucial when making the cheese sauce to prevent lumps and ensure a smooth, creamy consistency.

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

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/guilt-free-buffalo-chicken-mac-deliciously-cheesy-packed-with-veggies/>