

Classic Macaroni Salad: My Favorite Recipe for Picnics

1 lb elbow macaroni, cooked and drained



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ChefManiac

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INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb elbow macaroni, cooked and drained
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup sweet pickle relish
- 2 tablespoons yellow mustard
- 1/4 cup diced celery
- 1/4 cup diced red onion
- 1/4 cup diced red bell pepper
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1 tablespoon sugar (optional, for sweetness)
- 2 hard-boiled eggs, chopped (optional)

Swaps and Notes:

Macaroni: Elbow macaroni is the classic choice here, but any small pasta shape, like small shells or ditalini, will work just as well.

Vegetables: Feel free to swap the vegetables based on your preference. Shredded carrots, green bell pepper, or even some diced cucumber would be great additions.

Sweetness: I've included sugar as an optional ingredient. Some people prefer a sweeter dressing, so feel free to add a tablespoon or two to taste.

Mayonnaise: Using a good quality, full-fat mayonnaise will give you the creamiest and most flavorful dressing.

How to Make the Best Macaroni Salad:

Cook the Pasta: Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the elbow macaroni and cook according to the package directions until al dente. Drain the pasta well and rinse it with cold water to stop the cooking process and cool it down.

Prep the Veggies: While the pasta is cooking, dice your celery, red onion, and red bell pepper into small, uniform pieces. If using, chop the hard-boiled eggs.

Make the Dressing: In a large bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, sweet pickle relish, yellow mustard, apple cider vinegar, salt, black pepper, and optional sugar until the mixture is smooth and well combined.

Combine Everything: Add the cooled, drained macaroni to the bowl with the dressing. Add the diced celery, red onion, and red bell pepper. Gently fold everything together until the pasta and vegetables are evenly coated in the dressing. If you're using them, fold in the chopped hard-boiled eggs now.

Chill to Perfection: Cover the bowl and refrigerate the macaroni salad for at least 2 hours, or ideally overnight. This chilling time is essential, as it allows all the flavors to meld together and the pasta to fully absorb the dressing.

Serve: Give the salad a final stir before serving. If it seems a little dry after chilling, you can add another tablespoon of mayonnaise or a splash of milk to loosen it up.

Tips for Success:

Don't Overcook the Pasta: Cook the macaroni to al dente. Overcooked pasta will turn mushy once it's mixed with the dressing.

Rinse the Pasta: Rinsing the cooked pasta with cold water is a crucial step. It stops the cooking and removes excess starch, preventing the salad from becoming gummy.

Taste and Adjust: The key to a great macaroni salad is to taste the dressing and the finished salad.

Adjust the salt, pepper, or sweetness as needed.

Serving Suggestions and Pairings:

Storage and Leftover Tips:

More Recipes You Will Love:

My Sheet Pan Quesadillas are a lifesaver when you need to feed a crowd.

For a hearty and comforting dinner, my Dorito Casserole is a fun twist on a classic.

If you're craving a classic Southern comfort dish, my Cajun Chicken Sausage Gumbo is always a winner.

And for dessert, you can't go wrong with my Big Family Banana Pudding.

DIRECTIONS

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9. **Taste and Adjust:** The key to a great macaroni salad is to taste the dressing and the finished salad. Adjust the salt, pepper, or sweetness as needed.
10. **Serving Suggestions and Pairings:** This macaroni salad is the quintessential side dish for any casual meal. It pairs perfectly with anything from the grill, like hot dogs, hamburgers, or grilled chicken. It's also fantastic as a side for fried chicken or pulled pork. If you're looking for another great salad to serve, my Light Tangy Chicken Salad is a fantastic, no-mayo alternative.
11. **Storage and Leftover Tips:** Macaroni salad is a great make-ahead dish. Store any leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3-4 days. Because the pasta absorbs the dressing over time, you might find it a little dry on day two or three. Just stir in a tablespoon or two of extra mayonnaise and a dash of vinegar to refresh it.
12. **More Recipes You Will Love:** If you're hosting a get-together or just looking for more crowd-pleasing recipes, be sure to check out these other favorites:
13. **My Sheet Pan Quesadillas** are a lifesaver when you need to feed a crowd.
14. For a hearty and comforting dinner, my **Dorito Casserole** is a fun twist on a classic.
15. If you're craving a classic Southern comfort dish, my **Cajun Chicken Sausage Gumbo** is always a winner.
16. And for dessert, you can't go wrong with my **Big Family Banana Pudding**.
17. **Final Thoughts:** This Macaroni Salad recipe is a timeless classic for a reason. It's easy, delicious, and brings a little bit of comfort and joy to any meal. I hope it becomes a staple in your kitchen and at your gatherings, just as it is in mine.
18. If you give this recipe a try, let me know what you think in the comments below. Do you add anything extra to your macaroni salad? I'd love to hear your secrets!

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