

Cheater's Mac and Cheese: The Creamiest Shortcut Comfort Food

Cheater's Mac and Cheese (Creamy, Cozy, and Ridiculously Easy)



OVEN
375°F

TIME
15 min

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SAVE
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INGREDIENTS

- Elbow macaroni (or any short pasta)
- Butter
- Milk (whole milk is best for richness)
- Cream cheese (the "cheater" hero-instant creaminess)
- Shredded cheese (cheddar is classic; see swaps below)
- Salt + black pepper
- Garlic powder (optional but highly recommended)
- Breadcrumbs or crushed crackers (for topping)
- Parmesan (optional, for extra savory bite)

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook the pasta: Boil macaroni in salted water until just al dente. Drain and set aside.
2. Make the quick creamy base: In the same pot (less dishes!), melt butter over low heat. Add milk and cream cheese, stirring until smooth and creamy.
3. Add the cheese: Stir in shredded cheese gradually until melted. Season with salt, pepper, and garlic powder if using.
4. Combine pasta + sauce: Toss the drained pasta into the cheese sauce and mix until every noodle is coated.
5. Top it off: Pour into a buttered baking dish. Mix breadcrumbs with a little melted butter (and Parmesan if you like), then sprinkle over the top.
6. Bake until bubbly: Bake at 375°F until hot and bubbly with a lightly golden top. For extra browning, broil for 1-2 minutes at the end-watch closely.

SWAPS & NOTES

Cheese choices: Sharp cheddar is the backbone, but mixing in Monterey Jack, Gruyère, or mozzarella makes it extra melty.

Use a dollop of sour cream or Greek yogurt for tang (it won't be quite as silky, but still great).

Add a pinch of cayenne, chili flakes, or a spoon of hot sauce.

Gluten-free: Use GF pasta + GF breadcrumbs.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

It softens more in the oven, so aim for al dente.

Pre-shredded works, but freshly shredded melts smoother.

High heat can make cheese sauces grainy.

That topping goes from golden to burned fast.

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

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/cheaters-mac-and-cheese-the-creamiest-shortcut-comfort-food/>