

Mac and Cheese •

Ingredients

Elbow macaroni	1 lb.	Salt	1/4 tsp.
Butter	1/2 cup (1 stick)	Black pepper	1/4 tsp.
All-purpose flour	1/2 cup	Sodium citrate (optional)	1/2 tsp.
Whole milk, warmed	4 cups	Sharp cheddar	1 lb.
Heavy cream	1/2 cup	Gruyere cheese	1/2 lb.
Smoked paprika	1 tsp.	Smoked gouda cheese	1/4 lb.
Hungarian hot paprika	1 tsp.	Cooked ham, diced	1 cup (6 oz.)
Garlic powder	1/2 tsp.	Parmesan cheese	1/2 cup
Dry mustard powder	1 tsp.	Panko breadcrumbs	1/2 cup
		Parsley	1 Tbsp

Directions

Preheat oven to 375°F — Lightly grease a 9 inch \times 13 inch baking dish — Shred **sharp cheddar**, **Gruyere**, and **smoked gouda cheeses**; combine in *Large Bowl #1* — Shred **Parmesan cheese**; set aside in *Small Bowl #1* — Chop **ham**; set aside in *Small Bowl #2* — Warm **milk** — Combine **sodium citrate** and 2 Tbsp. water in *Small Bowl #3*

1. **Cook the Macaroni:** Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil. Add the **elbow macaroni** and cook according to package directions until al dente. Drain well and set aside. Do not rinse.
2. **Make the Roux:** In a large, heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven, melt $1/2$ cup **butter** over medium heat. Whisk in $1/2$ cup **flour**. Cook, stirring constantly, for $2\text{-}3$ minutes until a pale golden roux forms.
3. **Build the Cheese Sauce Base:** Gradually whisk in 4 cups **warmed whole milk**, a little at a time, until smooth. Continue whisking until the sauce thickens about $5\text{-}7$ minutes. Stir in $1/2$ cup **heavy cream**, 1 tsp. **smoked paprika**, 1 tsp. **Hungarian hot paprika**, $1/2$ tsp. **garlic powder**, and 1 tsp. **dry mustard powder**. Season with $1/4$ tsp. **salt** and $1/4$ tsp. **black pepper** to taste. Stir in **sodium citrate** (*Small Bowl #3*) thoroughly.
4. **Melt the Cheeses:** Reduce the heat to low. Add the shredded **sharp cheddar**, **Gruyere**, and **smoked gouda cheeses** (*Large Bowl #1*) to the sauce, a handful at a time, stirring constantly until melted and smooth.
5. **Combine Macaroni & Cheese:** Add the cooked macaroni to the cheese sauce and stir gently until fully coated. Fold in the diced **ham** (*Small Bowl #2*).
6. **Assemble & Top:** Transfer the mac and cheese mixture to the prepared baking dish, spreading it evenly. In *Small Bowl #4*, combine the **grated Parmesan cheese** ($1/2$ cup, *Small Bowl #1*) and $1/2$ cup **panko breadcrumbs**. Sprinkle this mixture generously over the top.

7. **Bake:** Bake for *20-25 minutes*, or until the mac and cheese is bubbly around the edges and the topping is golden brown and crispy.
8. **Serve:** Let the mac and cheese stand for *5-10 minutes* before serving. Garnish with fresh parsley.