

SAY CHEESE!

And See Profits Soar,
with Cheese-Based Foods



LOBSTER MACARONI AND CHEESE

YIELD: 8 Servings

Chef Jake Hizny

Whether it's a hot bowl of oatmeal in the morning or meatloaf and mashed potatoes, everyone has a favorite comfort food. Grilled cheese sandwiches and macaroni & cheese often top the list of beloved comfort foods, although when dining out, customers don't want to see something on your menu that they could make at home! In fact, Joseph Baum & Michael Whiteman Company told NPR's *The Salt* blog that guests are bored with "previously comforting but unexciting 'crisis food.'" That's why I've gathered the following ideas, so you can add unconventional, upscale flavors to comfort classics.

Grilled Cheese Grows Up

Restaurant consultancy Andrew Freeman & Company puts grilled cheese on a pedestal, predicting that in 2012, it will begin to replace the hamburger on menus! While that may be a stretch, there's no denying grilled cheese is very popular right now. Like mac & cheese, in its simplest form, it is what I call a "kid comfort food," one that parents frequently serve up to their children. You've got to give it an adult-like treatment to justify including it on your menu! That means adding gourmet touches like artisan breads, unique cheese, and extras like vegetables, herbs, and even meat. You should also explore integrating ethnic culinary traditions into these American staples: Try a Mexican queso blanco in your mac & cheese, or use Indian naan bread for your grilled cheese.

Maines stocks a variety of high-quality cheeses and breads with homemade appeal. Let me go into more detail. Maines stocks outstanding bread lines in Bakery De France and Euro Bake; both lines will give you more variety than you will need or can imagine. Some of the breads that will be available to you include, but are not limited to, baguettes, batards, sourdough, ciabatta, multi-grains, breads made with fruit (apple or raisin), potato – you get it! I'll cover the cheese options when we get to the mac & cheese section!

000110	3 oz. Butter
340657	t.t. Kosher Salt
330611	1 lb. Pasta, small shells
097737	2 ea. Shallots, finely chopped
097210	2 ea. Galrc Cloves, peeled, chopped
345631	t.t. Black Pepper, café
225647	1 oz. Tomato Paste
381254	2 1/2 oz. Flour, all-purpose
N/A	1/4 c. Cocktail Sherry
015500	32 oz. Heavy Cream
345590	1/2 tsp. Paprika
345660	1/4 tsp. Cayenne Pepper
345115	1 ea. Bay Leaves
014222	1 lb. White Cheddar Cheese, shredded
014227	1 lb. Gruyere Cheese, shredded
133338	1 lb. Lobster, Claw & Knuckle Meat (Precooked), chopped
326334	1/4 c. Panko Bread Crumbs
097644	1/4 c. Fresh Parsley, chopped

**** Note: you will need 8 Individual Ramekins**

(Recipe continued on page 21)



Chef Jake's Gourmet Grilled Cheese Ideas

- **Moscow Russian:** Smoked turkey, vodka-marinated kraut, smoked gouda, and Russian dressing stuffed between black forest grain bread and grilled to perfection.
- **Jersey Shore:** Homemade crab cake, wilted garlic spinach, roasted red pepper, herbed cream cheese on sourdough – toasted just right.
- **The Hot Italian:** Three-cheese Asiago bread filled with grilled salami, capicola ham, pepperoni, sun-dried tomato pesto, roasted garlic, and of course, melted provolone.
- **The Fancy Elvis:** Grilled banana, peanut butter, sweet cream cheese, and raspberry preserves on farmer's white bread, grilled to a golden brown.

Gourmet Macaroni and Cheese, Please

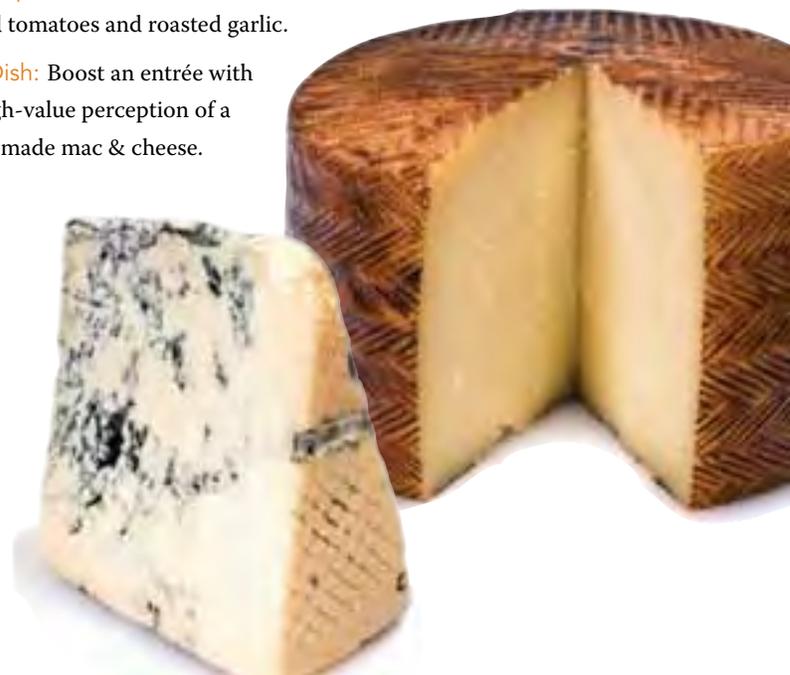
You might think that macaroni and cheese is an all-American, down-home meal. That is far from the truth: President Thomas Jefferson brought this dish to the United States after visiting Paris in the late 1700s; he even served it in the White House in 1802. Today, mac & cheese is getting back to its prestigious roots. Who hasn't seen a lobster mac & cheese on the menu at a white-tablecloth establishment? It's also ideal for all dayparts and menu sections:

Appetizer: Offer a trio of small ramekins, each with a different mac & cheese variety (try fresh herbs such as rosemary or basil or ingredients from ethnic cuisines like shiitake mushrooms or kalamata olives).

Entrée: Add a protein such as andouille sausage, steak, slab bacon, shrimp, or crab.

Lunch Special: Served with a side dish of stewed tomatoes and roasted garlic.

Side Dish: Boost an entrée with the high-value perception of a house-made mac & cheese.





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(Recipe continued from page 19)

Pasta and Cheese: Explore the Possibilities

The Cheese! Cheddar, American, Bleu cheese, Fresh Mozzarella, Parmigiano-Reggiano, Gruyere, Muenster, Pepper Jack, Swiss, Provolone, Brie, Manchego and Irish Cheddar.

**My favorite combination is a 30-50-20 blend of Gruyere, Irish Cheddar and Parmigiano-Reggiano*

The Pasta! My favorite is a twisted elbow, but I have seen just about every type of pasta used that is available. I personally like pasta that has some form of a twist that allows the sauce to cling. Other options include rotini, bow-ties, fusilli, mini penne, cavatelli, orechiette, radiatore or small shell.

Marketing Your Reinvented Comfort Foods

- Place under “House Favorites” on your menu, where customers are willing to pay more for house-made dishes.
- Use vivid menu descriptions. For example, consider this description from an advertisement by Williams & Sonoma for their Mac and Cheese Ramekins: “A silken béchamel cheese sauce is combined with Italian pasta, portioned into ramekins and sprinkled with crisp bread crumbs.”
- Teach your servers how to sell: They need to know how to describe it with mouth-watering accuracy.
- Sampling: When the server comes to the table to present menus, possibly drop a 1 oz. sample of mac & cheese or a slice of your grilled cheese.
- If you do banquets, try a mac & cheese station: Offer different pastas and cheese sauces with herbs, vegetables, and proteins as add-ons.
- Don’t forget eye appeal! Serve grilled cheese on a wooden cutting board or mac’ n’ cheese in a skillet or nice ramekin.

Remember, January is a time for change, especially when it comes to your menu. Now would be a good time to add gourmet versions of grilled cheese and mac & cheese to your menu!

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease ramekins with butter.
2. To a large stockpot of boiling salted water over medium heat, add the pasta and cook until al dente. Drain the pasta and reserve.
3. Add 2 oz. butter to a large saucepot over medium heat. Once the butter melts, add the shallots and garlic and saute until translucent. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Add the tomato paste and flour and stir to toast for approximately 3 minutes. Add the cocktail sherry and reduce by half. Slowly add the heavy cream, whisking well to remove any lumps. Add the paprika, cayenne pepper and bay leaf. Bring the cream up to a simmer and turn the heat to low. Let reduce until the cream is thick and can coat a spoon, approximately 6–8 minutes. When thickened, remove the bay leaf.
4. Mix in the grated cheese gradually, combining well after each addition. Then add the chopped lobster meat to the sauce and stir well. Add the pasta and combine. Now add the mixture to the greased ramekins and top with the panko bread crumbs and parsley. Bake for 20–25 minutes, remove from oven, and let rest for 2–3 minutes before serving.