



# MACARONI CHEESE

## INGREDIENTS - Serves 4 people

2 litres water

2 teaspoons salt

1½ cups macaroni pasta

3 tablespoons butter (50g)

3 tablespoons flour

2 cups milk

1 cup Wattie's® frozen whole kernel corn

1 cup grated tasty cheese

salt and pepper to season

2 fresh tomatoes, sliced

3 – 4 tablespoons grated tasty cheese, extra

## METHOD

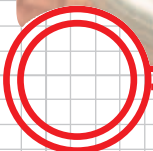
1. Bring the water to the boil in a large saucepan. Add the salt and macaroni pasta. Stir well. Boil for 12-15 minutes or until the pasta is al dente (firm to the bite). Drain well.
2. Turn the oven on to 190°C to preheat.
3. Melt the butter in a saucepan. Stir in the flour and cook, stirring, until bubbles appear on the surface and it looks 'frothy'.
4. Remove the pan from the heat. Gradually add the milk, stirring constantly. Return to the heat and cook, stirring, until the sauce comes to the boil and thickens. Stir in the frozen corn. Lower the heat and continue cooking and stirring for another 2 minutes.
5. Remove from heat. Stir in the grated cheese. Season with a little salt and pepper.
6. Stir the cooked macaroni into cheese sauce. Pour into a greased, medium-sized ovenproof dish.
7. Put the tomato slices on top of the macaroni mixture and sprinkle over the extra grated cheese.
8. Bake in the preheated oven for 15-20 minutes until the macaroni cheese is heated through and the top is golden.

**TIP** - Keep stirring the white sauce to make sure it doesn't go lumpy.

If you need to leave a white sauce mixture to stand for a few minutes or longer, press plastic food wrap right down onto the surface of the sauce. This will stop it forming a thick skin as it cools.

## RECIPE VARIATIONS

1. Cook 1 small finely diced onion in the butter over a low heat before adding the flour.
2. Add ¼ – ½ cup diced ham or cooked diced bacon to the cheese sauce before stirring in the macaroni.
3. Replace ¼ cup of the grated tasty cheddar cheese with crumbled blue cheese.





## UNDERSTANDING INGREDIENTS

### Pasta

- Pasta is the Italian name for dough and comes either fresh or dried.
- The finest pasta is made from strong hard wheat flour known as **durum**.
  - This coarse-textured flour gives pasta its ability to hold its shape and texture during cooking.
- **Dried pasta** is made from durum wheat flour mixed to a paste with water.
  - The dough is forced through specially shaped holes to form the shape required.
  - The most common kinds of dried pasta are spaghetti, long ribbon shaped lengths of fettuccine and smaller shapes such as tubes of penne and frilly edged lasagne.
  - Dried pasta is cooked in a large quantity of boiling salted water (at a rolling boil) for between 5 and 15 minutes, depending on its shape. See the Project Cook video for an example of a rolling boil.
- **Fresh pasta** is usually made with durum wheat flour, eggs and water.
  - There is generally a smaller range available, the most common are spaghetti, fettuccine and lasagne sheets.
  - Fresh pasta cooks in 3 – 4 minutes in boiling salted water.
  - It is possible to make fresh pasta at home. Durum wheat or strong wheat flour is kneaded with eggs and sometimes a little oil to make a smooth, pliable dough that is then rolled thin and cut into shapes.
  - Pasta machines speed up the rolling out and shaping process.
  - Homemade pasta cooks quickly, most shapes take only 2 – 3 minutes.



## FOOD CHEMISTRY

- White sauce becomes thick when it is cooked because of a process known as **gelatinisation**.
  - When the flour and milk are combined and heated, the starch granules swell up and make the mixture thick.

## COOKING TECHNIQUES

### White sauce

- White sauce is so widely used in cooking it is really useful to know how to make it. There are three main ingredients:
  1. Fat for flavour (butter or margarine).
  2. Starch for thickening (flour).
  3. Liquid (milk).
- White sauce can be used as a base for soups, in lasagne and in pasta sauces.
- By adding cheese to white sauce it becomes a cheese sauce.

### *To make White sauce:*

1. Melt the butter or margarine, stir in the flour and mix them together thoroughly.
  - This is called a **roux**. It separates the starch granules in the flour and helps stop lumps forming.
  - It is important to cook the flour at this stage to improve the final flavour of the sauce.
2. When the butter and flour are 'frothy' add the milk and blend it thoroughly, then heat the mixture until it comes to the boil. Stir constantly.
3. Always simmer the sauce over a low heat for a few minutes after it has boiled so the flour loses its raw taste and the sauce thickens properly.

## NUTRITION FACTS

### Calcium

- The calcium in Macaroni cheese is high because the recipe uses milk and cheese.
- **Calcium** is an essential nutrient that forms part of our bones and teeth and is essential in helping our body to function properly.
  - Our nerves and muscles also need calcium to do their work.
- Calcium is particularly important during the years our bodies are growing.
- We need to make sure we have enough calcium each day so our bones have the calcium they need to reach maximum strength.

*Macaroni cheese provides a serving each of the dairy and cereals groups. What other ingredients would help contribute to the other two food groups?*

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*What could you serve Macaroni cheese with to boost the vegetable intake of your meal?*

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