

Macaroni and Cheese

8 tablespoons butter
½ cup flour
1 quart milk
1 teaspoon salt
1 bay leaf
Black pepper to taste
1½ teaspoons Tabasco
1 cup crème fraîche or heavy cream
1¼ pounds of extra sharp Cheddar
¼ pound Shropshire Blue Cheese or other sharp, firm blue cheese
1 pound elbow macaroni

Melt the butter in a heavy casserole. Whisk in the flour and continue to cook over low heat for several minutes, without letting the butter brown. At the same time, scald the milk with the salt. All at one time, whisk the milk into the flour mixture. Bring to a boil, whisking constantly. Lower the heat, add the bay leaf, and let simmer for about 20 minutes, whisking occasionally.

In the meantime, grate the the two cheeses. (I like to do this quickly with the shredding disk in a food processor.)

Add the Tabasco, the black pepper, and the crème fraîche to the sauce, and simmer for several more minutes. Taste for seasoning.

Add all the blue cheese and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Cheddar to the simmering sauce, and whisk until the cheese is melted and the sauce is smooth. Taste again for seasoning.

Preheat the oven to 350°.

In the meantime, cook the macaroni until barely al dente. Remove the bay leaf from the sauce. Stir the drained macaroni into the sauce.

Pour the macaroni into a large heavy baking dish. Sprinkle the remaining Cheddar cheese on top. Bake until the macaroni begins to bubble. If you like a browned crust, place under a broiler for a minute or two.