



Macaroni & Cheese with Applewood Bacon *Pairs with Mirassou® Monterey County Chardonnay*

Preparation time, 30 minutes

Baking time, 45 minutes

½ pound macaroni or small shell pasta
4 ounces thick-cut applewood bacon
1 cup panko bread crumbs
1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme
3 tablespoons butter
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon grated nutmeg
1 tablespoon dry mustard
3 ½ cups whole milk
2 shallots, minced
12 ounces sharp white cheddar, grated
Salt to taste
Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Preheat an oven to 350 degrees.

Cook the pasta *al dente* in boiling salted water as directed on the package. Drain and set the pasta aside.

While the pasta cooks, cut the bacon into ¼-inch pieces, and sauté in a small pan until crisp and golden. Remove the bacon from the pan with a slotted spoon to drain on paper towels. Pour off all but 2 tablespoons of the drippings, and return the pan to low heat. Add the breadcrumbs and thyme to the bacon drippings, and toss to coat evenly. Season with a sprinkle of salt and pepper, and set the pan aside.

In a four-quart saucepan, melt the butter over medium-low heat. Add the flour, nutmeg and dry mustard, and stir vigorously with a wooden spoon to work the dry ingredients into the butter. Continue to cook for 3 minutes, stirring often. Whisk in the milk in ½-cup increments, making sure to work the mixture smooth each time. Whisk in the shallots, and simmer the mixture for about 10 minutes, stirring often. Turn off the heat and whisk in ¾ of the grated cheddar. Season the cheese sauce with salt and pepper to taste. Stir in the macaroni and bacon, then pour into a greased 2-quart baking dish and top with the remaining cheese. Sprinkle over the breadcrumb mixture and bake uncovered for 45 minutes, or until the cheese and breadcrumbs are golden.

Serves 6 as an entrée, 8 as a side dish