

Cheesy Hidden-Veg Macaroni

Creamy macaroni cheese with cauliflower and butternut squash blended into the sauce.

PREP TIME	COOK TIME	SERVES
40 minutes	1 hour	100 (portion about 220 g)

Suitable for: Vegetarian, Gluten-free with swap, Dairy-free with swap

Ingredients and shop codes

6.5 kg Dried macaroni
203562 Country Range Macaroni (4x3kg)

6 kg Cauliflower florets
810549 Fresh Cauliflower (each)

5 kg Butternut squash, peeled and diced

800 g Butter
001056 Meadow Churn Unsalted Butter (40x250g) or
001055 Salted

800 g Plain flour
203838 Country Range Plain Flour (6x1.5kg)

14 litres Whole milk
000109 Whole Milk (4x2L)

3.5 kg Mature vegetarian cheddar, grated (sauce)
Closest: 001517 Country Range Grated Mature Cheddar
(10x1kg)

800 g Mature vegetarian cheddar, grated (topping)
Closest: 001517 Country Range Grated Mature Cheddar
(10x1kg)

10 g Ground black pepper
203616 Country Range Ground Black Pepper (4x500g)

2 kg Fresh tomatoes, sliced (optional topping)
810585 Fresh Round Tomatoes (1x1kg)

Shop notes

- **Plain flour:** Gluten-free option: 200127 Doves GF Plain White Flour.
- **Mature vegetarian cheddar:** Check the label to confirm it is suitable for vegetarians.

Method

1. **Veg:** steam the cauliflower and squash together for 15 to 20 minutes until very soft. Blend with a little of the milk until completely smooth.
2. **Pasta:** cook the macaroni in unsalted boiling water for 1 to 2 minutes less than the packet instructs (it finishes cooking in the oven). Drain, rinse briefly in cold water and toss lightly in oil if holding.
3. **Sauce:** melt the butter, stir in the flour and cook for 2 minutes. Add the warm milk gradually, whisking constantly, and simmer for 8 to 10 minutes until it coats the back of a spoon. Stir in the veg purée, the cheddar for the sauce and the pepper until melted. Do not boil once the cheese is in.
4. **Assemble:** combine pasta and sauce, then divide between 1/1 gastro trays (65 mm deep, about 12 to 13 portions each). Top with the remaining cheddar, and tomato slices if using.
5. **Bake** at 180°C (fan 160°C) for 20 to 25 minutes until golden and bubbling, core temperature 75°C or above.
6. **Hot hold** at 63°C or above for up to 2 hours. If chilled for later use, **cool within 90 minutes** to below 8°C and **reheat once** to 75°C core.

Chef's tips

- **Portion:** about 220 g with the vegetable side. A little less for Reception and Key Stage 1.
- **Plating:** a crisp cheese top and a few tomato slices make it look "pizza-ish". Pasta shapes like macaroni, shells or cavatappi are easy for small hands.
- **Getting children to try it:** the vegetables are invisible. Do not announce them to children who may be put off. Let staff know so they can answer parent questions.
- **Reducing waste:** the squash and cauliflower purée freezes well in batches for soups. Cheese rinds and offcuts can go into the sauce.
- **Dairy-free alternative:** offer the **Rainbow Tomato Sauce** from Friday over dairy-free pasta (check the pasta contains no egg). Use a dairy-free spread, plant-based drink and dairy-free cheese for a dairy-free bake, checking labels for soya and gluten.
- **Gluten-free:** use gluten-free pasta (cook it separately, as it is more delicate) and replace the flour with 400 g cornflour.

Scaling

For 30 portions: multiply by 0.3 (1.95 kg pasta, 1.05 kg cheddar for the sauce)

Nutrition note

around 1.5 portions of vegetables per serving, plus plenty of calcium and protein from the cheese and milk (dairy for the day).

Allergens

Contains: Cereals containing gluten, Milk. **Check the label (varies by brand):** Eggs, Soya, Sulphites. No tree nuts or peanuts in this recipe (nut-free menu).

Nut-free menu: no nuts or peanuts in any recipe. Check labels on every batch for allergens, gluten-free and vegetarian status. Menus should be checked against the school's own policies and local authority guidance. Product codes are shopping suggestions; prices and stock show on shop.brookstreetfoods.co.uk once you are signed in.