

The History of Macaroni and Cheese

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Macaroni and cheese has always been my favorite food. My mother used to cook it for me with every meal because I insisted on having it with everything. Throughout the 18 years of my life, I have made it a point to try the macaroni and cheese on the menu of any restaurant that has it. I will then rate it and let every person that is there with me know if it is safe to eat or if I approve. My favorite macaroni and cheese side comes from a small Mexican restaurant from back home in Asheville, North Carolina called Cantina. Their queso macaroni is made with a mix of various cheeses and salsa queso for that creamy texture. My favorite macaroni side from a fast food restaurant is Bojangles. Their mac and cheese is so creamy and delectable. I would always eat Bojangles macaroni before swim practices and meets during high school. My family and friends consider me to be quite the macaroni and cheese connoisseur.

My family has a very special macaroni and cheese recipe that has been passed down on my dad's side for years. It is traditional elbow noodles and Jarlesburg swiss cheese, and milk for creaminess. I hate this recipe. It has never been good in my

opinion, but my family loves it. My mom calls it my one downfall as a macaroni and cheese critic because the best macaroni recipe out there, I don't like.

The origin of macaroni and cheese is unknown for certain, according to Smithsonian.com. The origin is believed to be most likely from Europe, thought to be specific to Italy. There are macaroni and cheese recipes from that region that date back to as early as the thirteenth century. One of the earliest recipes recorded included "macaroni," which was lasagne sheets made from fermented dough cooked in water, and tossed with grated cheese, usually parmesan cheese.

According to Smithsonian.com, macaroni and cheese was introduced to the



United States by Thomas Jefferson who, while visiting Italy, was blown away by the traditional pasta dishes there and their variety. Because of this, he brought back noodle recipes and a pasta maker to

have his new discovery in the comfort of his home. Jefferson loved macaroni and cheese so much that he served it at an 1802 state dinner. It became a popular dish among Jefferson's slaves and spread throughout the southern parts of the states and remains popular in that area.

Another macaroni and cheese origin theory comes from History Daily. Some researchers claim that the dish evolved from another dished called macaroni pudding.

Macaroni pudding was a casserole type dish that had become popular in New England. It was cheap and easy to make and became a staple at pot luck dinners at church events.

The food company, Kraft released box macaroni and cheese in 1937, introducing it to middle and lower-class Americans. Kraft sold 8 million boxes in its first year of production (the picture to the right is one of the first boxes made during this time). During World War II, rations made meat and vegetables hard to come by and macaroni and cheese was seen to be a cheap dinner for families struggling through the war. During the Great Depression, the box dish began to rise in popularity due to it being cheap and easy during such a large financial crisis in America, according to Smithsonian.



The process and craft of making cheese is thousands of years old, according to History Daily. Powdered cheese is an invention new to the twentieth century. Powdered cheese was invented in 1918 and was developed to extend the shelf life of boxed cheeses. It is also easier to prepare by adding the powdered cheese and simply stirring.

Now macaroni and cheese is a mainstay for college students alongside ramen noodles for the same reasons it was popular during the Great Depression. It is a staple in American homes in homemade and premade forms. It is expected as a side dish at most special occasions and holidays and can be seen as a favorite food to young

children. Macaroni and cheese is a portion of comfort food right alongside mashed potatoes and fried chicken in many American homes. Even in restaurants, macaroni and cheese are expected to be a side item on any menu.

Restaurants have begun to increase the production of macaroni and cheese outside of the simple side item. They are making the traditional comfort food gourmet by adding their own personal twists to the recipes. They are adding different types of cheeses or a bunch of cheeses all at one time. Some people add veggies to make it more healthy and others add meats to add depth to the dish. Many people have begun to add sauces like barbeque, chipotle sauces, or mayonnaise to switch up the traditional flavors.

There are many restaurants that have become famous for or even specialize in macaroni and cheese. For example, Mercer Kitchen in New York is known for its macaroni and cheese side dish. The recipe is that of the owner's wife that includes three types of cheddar cheese, elbow noodles, and cream cheese to create an extra creaminess. Another restaurant famous for its macaroni and cheese is Yardbird of Miami Florida, whose mac is celebrated with five kinds of cheese, Torchio pasta topped with bread crumbs, and fresh herbs all inspired by the owner's grandmother's recipe. New York is home to another popular restaurant with fantastic macaroni and cheese is Murray's Cheese Bar. The best recipe served here includes traditional style elbow macaroni, cave-aged Gruyère cheese, mozzarella cheese, spiced ham, and fried onions on top. These restaurants are prime examples of how macaroni and cheese are evolving in America, according to Explore, Food and Wine, a popular food website.