

K's Kitchen: Mac and cheese without a box

By Kathryn Reed

With temperatures consistently below freezing at night, it is time to start cooking comfort food. They tend to be dishes that make the house smell good, warm the insides and often involve having plenty for leftovers.

Mac and cheese has never been one of my favorite meals – not even as a kid. In fact, I had never made mac and cheese until I was an adult. It was for my nieces and nephew. It was that Kraft stuff that is a color yellow that I don't think is found in the natural world. It's all about additives.

My mom made a mac and cheese from scratch. I didn't like that either.

Considering I like pasta and cheese it seems hard to imagine I would not like this simple combination.

Thanks to Sue I finally do. She made the recipe below. What makes this ensemble different is the add-ons and the different cheeses. It's a bit of a grownup mac and cheese.



Adult Mac and Cheese

2 C grape or cherry tomatoes, halved

4 T extra virgin olive oil, divided

6 ounces penne pasta

2 tsp garlic, minced

5 T all purpose flour

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ C milk

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp kosher salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp pepper

$\frac{3}{4}$ C part-skim mozzarella cheese, shredded

1/3 C Parmesan cheese, grated

$\frac{1}{2}$ C fresh basil leaves

3 T panko

1/8 tsp crushed red pepper

Preheat boiler to high.

Combine tomatoes and 2 tsp oil on a jelly roll pan.

Broil 3 minutes or until tomatoes begin to break down.

Cook pasta. Drain water and return to pot.

In saucepan over medium heat add oil and garlic. Cook 1 minute and then add flour, milk, salt and pepper. Combine with a whisk. Simmer until thick; stirring constantly.

Remove pan from heat and stir in cheeses.

Add mixture to pasta. Stir to coat pasta.

Add tomatoes and basil.

Mixture may be spooned into individual ramekins or baking

dish. Top with panko and red pepper flakes. Broil for 2 minutes or until panko is brown. Additional basil leaves may be used as garnish.