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A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul.

June 2018

MACARONI AND CHEESE

Baked Spaghetti with Broccoli and Cheddar

Mexican Macaroni and Cheese

A Quick and Easy "Mac and Cheddar"

Roman Spaghetti with *Gorgonzola, Mascarpone,*
and Walnuts

It is June. School is out, gardens are demanding, and we have so many plans for the long, bright days. The ancients celebrated this time of year because the sun had returned and the earth was giving forth with plenty. They were comforted by the predictability of the seasonal change. Each day when we eat we are celebrating this time of year and comfort food is not a bad way to celebrate.

I remember first learning about fresh *pasta* from my grandmother as I "helped" her roll and cut and hang noodles; after all she was of German heritage. Ray remembers his mother rolling and cutting and hanging spaghetti; after all she was of Italian-French heritage. It was simply water, flour, and salt, and eggs for egg noodles. When I have made my own noodles, I truly sense a connection to a homemaker standing in the simplest of ancient kitchen spaces with her flour, water, and salt.

Walk through your grocery store and you may observe boxed macaroni and cheese being pulled from the shelf and handed to the child in the grocery cart "as a rattle." That child is hooked from that day forward on the processed product in the brightly colored blue and yellow package. People cruising the frozen food department take frozen macaroni and cheese dishes from the TV dinner displays. Macaroni and cheese, although British in origin is an American obsession, an American comfort food. Even though this is not a difficult dish to make at home, we observe the purchase of expensive processed products every time we shop. This month I want to share with you variety in this genre, variety that is so very easy to sample.

Keep in mind, to those of us born in the middle of the last century macaroni is an all-encompassing term for what we call *pasta* today. Elbows, *penne*, spaghetti, *fettucine*, angel hair, etc., etc., etc. were all just macaroni to us and routinely a macaroni dish of whatever shape and size was topped with cheese. Egg noodles were an entirely different thing and back then we had not been introduced to noodles from Asia to any great extent. Baked *ziti* with *ricotta* cheese and *lasagne* were the macaroni and cheese dishes, if you grew up in an Italian-American family. *Orzo* with *feta* was macaroni and cheese if you grew up in a Greek-American family. If you grew up on a *kibbutz* in Israel, a beautiful salad of Israeli *couscous* with *feta* cheese might well be your macaroni and cheese. Stuffed shells and cheese *ravioli* dishes technically qualify but let's pursue this in a more conventional manner. If you have tried my favorite macaroni and cheese recipe, A Remarkably Fine Macaroni and Cheese, which can be found on pp. 437-38 of volume I of *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul*, you already may have added one fine macaroni and cheese casserole to your repertoire.

BAKED SPAGHETTI WITH BROCCOLI AND CHEDDAR

TPT - 55 minutes

This is a simple family casserole that has always pleased. One of our daughter's friends, who joined us for dinner said, "This is not just spaghetti like my mommy makes." She was the same little girl who wouldn't eat an Italian potato salad with cheese, even though she liked potatoes and cheese, because it was a salad. She just dismissed it saying, "I don't eat salads." She did enjoy the spaghetti casserole!

3 quarts boiling water
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
One 3-inch piece lemon zest
4 ounces high protein or whole wheat spaghetti

1 1/2 teaspoons butter
1 large scallion—sliced
1 cup chopped broccoli—fresh or frozen and defrosted*
Pinch dried summer savory—finely crushed
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

2 tablespoons shredded (about 1/2 ounce) Cheddar cheese—sharp or mild, as preferred

1/4 cup skimmed milk
1/4 cup shredded (about 1 ounce) Cheddar cheese—sharp or mild, as preferred

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Prepare an **8-inch quiche dish** by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating.

In a large kettle set over *HIGH* heat, add lemon juice and lemon zest to *boiling* water. Break spaghetti in half. Add spaghetti and cook, stirring occasionally, over *HIGH* heat according to package directions, but *only until al dente*. Drain thoroughly, discarding lemon zest.

In a skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, melt butter. Add scallion slices and chopped broccoli. Sauté gently for several minutes, until *crisp-tender*. Stir in *finely* crushed savory and black pepper. Remove from heat and set aside.

In a mixing bowl, toss drained spaghetti with sautéed vegetables. Add the 2 tablespoonfuls shredded cheese and again toss. Turn into prepared casserole. Pour milk over. Sprinkle remaining 1/4 cupful shredded cheese evenly over.

Bake in preheated 350 degree F. oven for about 15 minutes, or until cheese is melted and bubbling.



Yields 4 servings

Notes: *Chopped fresh broccolini, although really a different vegetable altogether, can be substituted in this recipe, if preferred.

This recipe is easily doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 13.2 g.; FAT = 7.5 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 28.2 g.;
CALORIES = 231; CALORIES FROM FAT = 29%

MEXICAN MACARONI AND CHEESE

Macarrones Casero

TPT - 27 minutes

Epazote (Chenopodium ambrosioides), available dried from spice specialty firms, is a rather unusual but mild-tasting green herb used extensively in Latin American and South American cooking. Of the same genus as the well-behaved spinach-like Good King Henry, this Chenopodium is a large, easily-grown plant, also known as American wormseed, goosefoot, Mexican tea, and Jerusalem oak, which has a strong camphor-like odor. It repels insects and protects other insect-susceptible plants but it has a huge drawback for the herb gardener, it is a terribly invasive plant that, if planted, will be your nemesis to your dying day. Epazote is said to reduce the gassiness from legume dishes and it adds a nuance to this dish that is quite fascinating.

2 quarts boiling water
1 tablespoon lemon juice
One 3-inch strip lemon zest
3/4 cup high-protein or whole wheat elbow or cavatappi macaroni (pictured to the right), if you can find it



1 small bay leaf—crushed
1 teaspoon paprika
Pinch ground cumin
1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
Salt, to taste

1/4 cup vegetarian stock, of choice

6 tablespoons canned, diced tomatoes—well-drained
1/4 cup finely chopped onion

1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
1/2 teaspoon chopped fresh oregano or 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano—crushed
1/4 teaspoon dried epazote—crushed*

1/4 cup light dairy sour cream
3 tablespoons shredded Mexican cheese mixture or part-skimmed milk, low-moisture mozzarella cheese

In a large kettle set over *HIGH* heat, add lemon juice and zest to *boiling* water. Add macaroni. Boil for about 7 minutes. Pour into a strainer and allow to drain thoroughly. Discard lemon zest.

In a mortar, combine crushed bay leaf, paprika, ground cumin, black pepper, and salt. Using a mortar and pestle, grind to a powder. Set aside briefly.

In a non-stick-coated skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine stock, chopped tomatoes, *finely* chopped onion, and ground seasonings. Cook, stirring frequently, until onions are softened—about 5 minutes.**

Add chopped parsley and oregano, and crushed *epazote*. Cook, stirring frequently, for about 2 minutes more.

Add sour cream and shredded cheese. Cook, stirring constantly, until cheese melts. Add cooked, well-drained macaroni. Combine well, turning to coat macaroni with cheese mixture. While stirring *gently*, allow macaroni to heat through.



Turn into a heated serving bowl. *Serve at once.*

Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2 people

Notes: *To prevent the transfer of a bitterness, the *epazote* leaves should be added during the last 15 minutes of a cooking period. If you choose to grow it in your herb garden, be sure to harvest the seeds before they disperse or you will have many, too many, *epazote* plants the next season than you could ever want. It is so tenacious that a handful scattered on a city sidewalk will produce a sizable crop firmly established in the sidewalk cracks!



**If convenient to your schedule, this recipe may be prepared to this point ahead of time. Refrigerate cooked macaroni and sauce ingredients separately. When ready to prepare dinner, bring macaroni to room temperature, reheat sauce ingredients, and continue as above.



This recipe may be halved or doubled, when required. When doubling, use a kettle or large saucepan instead of a skillet.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 3.9 g.; FAT = 2.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 11.1 g.;
CALORIES = 74; CALORIES FROM FAT = 27%

A QUICK AND EASY “MAC AND CHEDDAR”

TPT - 41 minutes

We eat our main meal at midday so on days when I have an appointment in the morning, meals have to be planned rather strategically. When this dish is to be a side, I prep it early in the morning and refrigerate it. At the same time I defrost a soup or prep a salad. When I get home, I sprinkle the breadcrumbs on the “mac and cheese” and bake it while I finish off the other details. In fifteen to twenty minutes I can have our meal on the table. Each of the shapes that I prefer for this “mac and cheese” hold the sauce well but pipettes are far and away best at their job. Every macaroni that you slip into your mouth will be full of Cheddar sauce. This is just the right size for two people which means that we will not be eating dried leftovers the next day.

2 quarts water
1 1/2 tablespoons lemon juice
One 1-inch strip lemon zest
2/3 cup high protein or whole wheat pipette, elbow,
or penne macaroni
1 1/2 teaspoons safflower or sunflower oil

1 tablespoon butter
1/4 cup breadcrumbs

2 ounces sharp Cheddar cheese—cubed
2 tablespoons finely chopped onion
2 tablespoons light cream or half and half
1 tablespoon light dairy sour cream
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or to taste

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F. Prepare a **5-inch soufflé dish** or other oven-to-table casserole by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating.

In a kettle set over *HIGH* heat, bring water to the boil. Add lemon juice and zest. Add macaroni. Boil according to package directions. Just before the end of the cooking period, add oil. Pour into a strainer and allow to drain thoroughly. Discard lemon zest.

While the macaroni is cooking, combine butter and breadcrumbs in a small skillet set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat. Cook stirring constantly, until they start to color. Remove from heat and set aside briefly.

Turn well-drained macaroni into a saucepan set over *LOW* heat. Add Cheddar cheese, *finely* chopped onion, cream, sour cream, and pepper. Allow to simmer, stirring frequently, for several minutes. Turn into prepared soufflé dish. Sprinkle buttered breadcrumbs evenly over the sauced macaroni. Bake in preheated 325 degree F. oven for about 15 minutes, or until breadcrumbs brown.

Serve at once.

Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2 people

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 7.4 g.; FAT = 9.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 20.8 g.;
CALORIES = 192; CALORIES FROM FAT = 42%



ROMAN SPAGHETTI
WITH GORGONZOLA, MASCARPONE, AND WALNUTS
Spaghetti con Gorgonzola, Mascarpone, e Noci

TPT - 22 minutes

This dish, or a version of it, turned up on almost every menu in Rome during our visit. Here, we occasionally encounter “alfredo” sauces, often disappointing, but we never encounter this drier Roman-style sauce. It is so easy; it is so flavorful. This is a great recipe to keep in mind if you have drop-in company or if you have house guests and do not relish spending all of your time in the kitchen.

- 1/4 cup crumbled Gorgonzola cheese**
- 1/4 cup mascarpone cheese**
- 1/4 cup finely chopped preservative-free walnuts**

- 2 quarts boiling water**
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice**
- One 3-inch strip lemon zest**
- 1/2 pound high protein or whole wheat spaghetti**

- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

- Grated pecorino Romano cheese, for garnish**

Set a serving bowl on a warming tray set on *HIGH*.

In the bowl, combine *Gorgonzola* and *mascarpone* cheeses. Mash to combine well. Add *finely* chopped walnuts. Mash again.

In a large kettle set over *HIGH* heat, add lemon juice and lemon zest to the 2 quarts *boiling* water. Add spaghetti and cook, stirring occasionally, according to package directions. *Before draining*, transfer about 1/4 cupful of the *pasta* cooking water to the serving bowl with the cheeses. Stir to integrate well. Drain the spaghetti quickly, discarding lemon zest. Add spaghetti to serving bowl with the cheeses. Toss.

Serve at once into heated soup/pasta plates. Pass grated *Romano* cheese.

Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2-3 people

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING (exclusive of grated cheese garnish) –
PROTEIN = 11.1 g.; FAT = 26.8 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 42.6 g.;
CALORIES = 339; CALORIES FROM FAT = 71%

Salads do wonders to satisfy summer appetites.

Next month please stop by and choose a favorite slaw.

*I just couldn't narrow down the selections
so there should be something for everybody.*

Judy

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.

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