GRANNY PLANTS

Pumpkin Mac & Cheese

the cheese sauce gets a secret weapon

Kid-friendly, crowd-friendly, and nobody will guess the secret ingredient. Serves 6. About 35 minutes start to finish.

You'll need:

- 1 lb elbow macaroni (or shells — they hold the sauce nicely)
- 3 tbsp butter
- 3 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 2 cups milk
- 1 cup pumpkin puree
- 3 cups shredded sharp cheddar
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp ground mustard
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: 1/2 cup breadcrumbs + 1 tbsp melted butter, for a baked topping

Good to know:

The pumpkin doesn’t taste like "pumpkin" here — it just makes the sauce silkier and a little more nutritious. This is a great way to sneak vegetables past a skeptic.

How to make it

1. **Cook the pasta.**
   Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and cook the macaroni until just al dente, according to package directions. Drain and set aside.

2. **Start the roux.**
   In the same pot, melt the butter over medium heat. Whisk in the flour and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly, until it smells lightly toasted.

3. **Add the milk.**
   Slowly whisk in the milk, a little at a time, until smooth. Cook 3-4 minutes, whisking often, until the sauce thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon.

4. **Stir in pumpkin and cheese.**
   Whisk in the pumpkin puree, garlic powder, and ground mustard until smooth. Remove from heat and stir in the cheddar and parmesan, a handful at a time, until fully melted.

5. **Combine and season.**
   Fold the cooked macaroni into the cheese sauce until every piece is coated. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

6. **Serve as-is, or bake it.**
   Serve straight from the pot for stovetop mac and cheese. For a baked version, transfer to a greased baking dish, top with the breadcrumb mixture, and bake at 375°F for 15-20 minutes until golden and bubbly.

Granny’s notes:

Reheats well with a splash of milk stirred in to loosen the sauce back up.
Great next to a bowl of pumpkin chili for a full savory-pumpkin spread.
Swap in gouda or gruyere for part of the cheddar for a fancier version.