

Roasted Butternut Squash Mac and Cheese

Serving: 6-8

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 30 minutes

Total time: 45 minutes

Ingredients:

- 1 lb diced butternut squash (about 4 cups)
- ½ cup raw cashews, soaked in 2 cups of hot water
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO) spray
- 1 small yellow or sweet onion, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, sliced
- 1 cup vegetable broth
- 2 tbsp arrowroot or tapioca powder
- ½ cup nutritional yeast
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 16 oz pasta (shells or preferred shape, whole wheat, lentil)
- Optional toppings: thawed frozen peas or roasted broccoli
- 1 cup panko bread crumbs for topping

Instructions:

1. Cook the Butternut Squash:

- Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C).
- Peel and cut squash to make about 4 cups or 1 lb of pieces.

- Arrange on a baking sheet, spray with olive oil, and bake for 30 minutes until soft and golden.
2. **Prepare the Sauce:**
- While the squash is baking, bring a pot of water (8-10 cup) to a boil for the pasta. Add some salt to the water (1-2 teaspoons).
 - In a skillet, sauté the chopped onion in olive oil spray for about 10 minutes until translucent. Add garlic and cook for 1 minute without browning. Pour in the broth, letting the mixture soften. Let the liquid evaporate for about 2-3 minutes on high heat.
 - In a blender, combine the roasted squash, onion mixture, soaked cashews, arrowroot powder, nutritional yeast, Dijon mustard, lemon juice, and a pinch of salt. Blend until very smooth.
3. **Cook the Pasta:**
- Cook pasta according to package directions, aiming for al dente. Reserve 1 cup of pasta water before draining.
4. **Combine and Serve:**
- In a large pot over medium heat, pour in the butternut cheese sauce and heat, stirring for 1–2 minutes until slightly thickened.
 - Add the drained pasta and stir, adding reserved pasta water if needed for a creamier texture.
 - In a small pan, dry-saute the panko for 1-2 minutes to make it crisper. Remove from heat and add ¼ cup of walnut parm.
 - Pour the mac and cheese in a serving dish. Sprinkle with panko mix and serve immediately.

Notes:

- **Canned Option:** Substitute fresh squash with 1 can (16 oz) butternut or pumpkin puree.
- **Storage:** Cheese sauce freezes well—store separately from pasta.
- **Dietary Options:** Use gluten-free pasta if needed; for nut-free, replace cashews with ½ cup full-fat coconut milk and skip nuts entirely.

- **Optional Add-Ins:** Try roasted or steamed broccoli, green peas, or edamame for extra texture and nutrition.
- **Tip:** To save prep time, use pre-cut butternut squash.