



DISHING IT UP WITH DANA

Mac & Cheese Includes Potatoes and Chips

The ultimate comfort food combines pasta with America's favorite vegetable in two formats

Column and photos by Dana Rady, Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association

What does the word “comfort” mean to you? A glass of spirits with friends, perhaps? A hot bath after a long day? Curling up in a blanket while watching a movie and eating popcorn?

Chances are you have multiple scenarios that come to mind when you think of being comfortable.

Now, let's change the question. What comes to mind when you think of “comfort food?”

Not long ago, Eric and I took the kids on a trip to California to visit my Uncle Dan, the same one who introduced me to the classic Vodka Gimlet.

While there, my cousin invited us to her house for dinner and made hamburgers along with homemade macaroni and cheese. But this wasn't just any mac and cheese recipe. It was that of her mother, Marie Stefferud, my dad's sister and my Uncle Dan's wife, who passed away in 2023.

Just a few bites of her dish brought me back to years past when the “California crew,” my Aunt Marie, Uncle Dan, and cousins,

Lisa and Christian, would visit Wisconsin each summer. Indulging in my aunt's macaroni and cheese in California where she resided for decades brought me comfort, in traditions, family, values, and cooking.

AUNT MARIE'S MAC & CHEESE

I didn't exactly make my Aunt Marie's mac and cheese recipe when we got home, although this is definitely on my to-do list.

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Chesapeake Bay Potato Chip Mac and Cheese

INGREDIENTS:

1 lb.	(corkscrew) pasta (other macaroni pasta can be subbed), cooked and cooled
8 oz.	yellow potatoes, cut into 1/2-inch cubes, cooked and cooled
3 cups	Half & Half
1 cup	heavy cream
1 tsp.	sea salt
1 3/4 cup	Colby Jack cheese, shredded
2 tsp.	Old Bay Seasoning
1 Tbsp.	vegetable oil
2 Tbsp.	unsalted butter
4 cloves	garlic, chopped fine
8 1/2 oz.	Sea Salt Kettle Chips, slightly crushed
2 tsp.	Old Bay Seasoning
2 Tbsp.	parsley, chopped





Instead, her recipe inspired me to make mac and cheese with a vegetable that has long been the epitome of comfort—delicious and tender potatoes—combined with soft pasta, velvety cheese, a little heat from Old Bay Seasoning, and crispy potato chips as a topping.

What I love about the Chesapeake Bay Potato Chip Mac and Cheese is not only the subtle heat (I enjoy a bit of spice), warmth, and saltiness, but also the contrasting texture of soft versus crunchy. Talk about everything you could ever want in one dish!

Additionally, potatoes are versatile, and so is this recipe. Use your favorite local Wisconsin cheese or branch out to include the pungent flavors of blue cheese or smoked gouda! Need gluten free? Use gluten free, plant-based pasta. Want some added flavor? Experiment by using different types of potato chips.

Indulging in comfort food prepared with America's favorite vegetable is truly the best way to get comfortable and unwind. So, the next time I take a trip down memory lane and make

my Aunt Marie's delicious macaroni and cheese, I just may be adding a vegetable.

DIRECTIONS

Gather and scale all ingredients. Boil the pasta in water until just tender (about 8-10 minutes), drain, and set aside. Boil the potatoes until just tender as well, drain and set aside.

In a large pot over medium-high heat, combine the Half & Half with the heavy cream. Bring the pot to a boil and reduce the heat to medium. When the cream is reduced by about half (5-6 minutes), add salt, cheese, and Old Bay Seasoning.

Stir to combine and adjust the consistency slightly with a little water if need be. Gently stir in the pasta and cooked potatoes until both are well coated by the cheese sauce.

Keep the mac and cheese warm until ready to serve. In the meantime, make the potato chip topping.

In a large non-stick skillet, heat the oil and butter up over medium heat. Add the garlic and swirl the pan until the garlic is fragrant (about 15 seconds.) Add the chips and stir constantly until the chips are golden.

Season the chips with the Old Bay and remove them from the heat. Add the parsley and stir to combine. Allow the potato chip topping to cool slightly before using.

When ready to serve, portion some of the mac and cheese into serving bowls and top with the potato chip topping.

Serve right away and enjoy!

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