

The Resurgence of Macaroni and Cheese

In spite of the medical world's health warnings about carbohydrates and fats, macaroni and cheese has continued to earn a place on the list of America's favorite foods for many years. Although many adults have been more cautious in recent years when it comes to eating foods containing carbohydrates and fats, macaroni and cheese appears to be making a comeback as a popular adult food.

Macaroni and cheese is a comfort food for many adults. Comfort foods invoke feelings of safety and pleasant memories of childhood and youth. We all crave the favorite foods we grew up with, and macaroni and cheese is a food that most of us ate and loved as children. Many of us lead busy, stressful lives, and a hot plate of macaroni and cheese can take us back to a time when life was much simpler.

Taking advantage of the recent growth in popularity of macaroni and cheese, Tillamook Cheese began a macaroni and cheese recipe contest in 2005. The Tillamook Macaroni and Cheese Cook-Off attracts thousands of participants each year. Family macaroni and cheese recipes passed down through the generations along with new gourmet creations of the dish are entered. Contestants are allowed to submit up to three different recipes. There are six preliminary cook-off locations, with one location each in California, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Illinois, and Texas. Three finalists from each of the six locations are selected for the grand cook-off held in Portland, Oregon, the home of Tillamook Cheese. The grand prize winner is dubbed "The Big Cheese" and takes home a prize of \$5,000.

Well-known chef Emeril Lagasse recently held a "Best Mac 'N Cheese Ever Challenge." This contest was covered by ABC's Good Morning America and generated a large amount of attention from the American public. The contest was narrowed down to five participants from the thousands of entrants, and Good Morning America viewers were asked to vote on the winning recipe. Laura Macek won the grand prize with a gourmet three-cheese macaroni and cheese recipe that uses cavatappi pasta, shallots, and Applewood smoked bacon.

Macaroni and cheese received a huge publicity boost from the 2008 Governor's Ball following the Academy Awards. Black Truffle Macaroni and Cheese was presented by Chef Wolfgang Puck as one of the entrees, showing people worldwide that even celebrities are fond of macaroni and cheese. Websites and books devoted entirely to macaroni and cheese and are more evidence of this comfort food's growing popularity.