

## **Smoked Gruyere Mac & Cheese with Fried Capicola**

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Serves: 6+

Ingredients:

3 cups Rigatoni pasta  
2 Tbs. butter  
2 Tbs. flour  
2 cups whole milk  
1 cup heavy cream  
2 cups Smoked Gouda, shredded  
1/2 cup Swiss, shredded  
1 tsp. pepper  
1 tsp. paprika  
1/4 to 1/2 lb. Capicola

For Breadcrumbs:

3 Tbs. butter, melted  
1/2 cup Panko breadcrumbs

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Cook the pasta until al dente, or one minute less than the recommended cooking time.

In a medium saucepan, melt the 2 Tbs. of butter. Stir in the flour to create a roux. Whisk in the milk and heavy cream. Cook over medium to medium high heat until just boiling, stirring frequently. Once it starts to boil, remove from heat and stir in the cheeses and spices. Continue to stir over low heat until the cheese has melted.

Mix the 3 Tbs. of butter with the breadcrumbs.

Stir the pasta into the cheese sauce. Pour into an 8 x 8 inch or a 9 x 13 inch pan. Sprinkle breadcrumbs over the top. Cover pan with foil.

Bake for 20 minutes. Uncover and bake for 5 to 10 minutes more, or until the cheese sauce is bubbling around the edges. If the breadcrumbs are not browned, broil for 2 or 3 minutes, watching closely.

Meanwhile, while the macaroni is baking, slice the Capicola thinly and fry over medium heat. Add a touch of olive oil if it seems to be sticking. Once the ham is crispy, drain on paper towels. Serve in a separate dish, to be used as a topping.

[Note: if you use a different shape of pasta, you may need to adjust the amount. Also, the ham is only meant as an accent. If you want a significant portion in your macaroni, use 1/2 to 1 lb.]

