

MY TABLE FOR ONE

TRADER JOE'S LOBSTER MAC AND CHEESE FOR ONE

Lobster Mac and Cheese (adapted from kitchenistadiaries.com)

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 1 Meal-size serving

1 oz Sharp Cheddar (or 2 slices of TJ's "crowd cheeser" cheddar)

1 oz Pepper Jack (or 2 slices of TJ's "crowd cheeser" pepper Jack)

1/2 oz Gouda (I used one slice of TJ's Sliced Smoked Gouda)

1/2 cup Dried *mini* Elbow or Mezze Penne noodles

1 tbsp Salted Butter, plus additional for baking dish

1 tbsp All-Purpose Flour

1 cup Whole Milk

1 Dried Bay Leaf

1/2 Shallot, sliced in thick rounds (do not substitute w onion)

1 Packet TJ's Savory Broth Reduced Sodium Liquid Concentrate (or low-sodium bullion, *must be under* 500mgs of sodium)

1 *pinch* dry mustard

1 *pinch* nutmeg

Black pepper to taste

1 shake of Worcestershire sauce (this is for *one*, remember!)

1/4 cup TJ's Langostino Tails

Kosher salt (for pasta water)

Old Bay Seasoning & Chopped Parsely(for garnish/topping)

Place cheese slices in freezer for 5-10 minutes for ease of chopping. While the cheese firms up, bring 3 cups of water to boil in a small saucepan. Add kosher salt and dried bay leaf, simmer on lowest heat for 10 minutes or until leaf begins to soften. Turn off heat and cover until ready to boil noodles. While the water boils, slice 1/2 of the shallot into thick rounds and place in a microwave-proof bowl with the milk, microwave on high 2 minutes. Set aside to steep.

Pre-heat your oven to 350. Bring water back to boil, boil noodles till 1 minute short of al-dente (around 5 minutes). While the noodles boil, remove cheese slices from freezer and chop as finely as you can, put back in fridge. Butter your baking dish (I used a mini-ceramic cast-iron pan, but an aluminum mini loaf works well here), set aside. Drain the noodles (reserving the water and bay leaf), rinse in cold water. Remove shallot slices from milk (the remaining steps go fast and the roux requires your undivided attention, so make sure you get your mise en place!).

In the same saucepan, melt 1 tbsp of butter over medium-low heat until foamy. Add your tablespoon of flour and stir with a whisk to combine. *Lift the pot slightly away from the heat* and continue to stir for two minutes or until the roux turns a little golden and the raw flour smell turns toasty. Once your roux is ready, return pot to heat and add a splash of the pasta water (about 1- 1 1/2 tbsp), continuously stirring. Add the milk in a small stream as you continue to stir. Bring béchamel to a boil and turn the heat to low, stirring often. Simmer until it thickens slightly and coats the back of a spoon (this goes much faster than you think), turn off the heat & grab your cheese. Add the chicken broth concentrate, pepper, dry mustard, nutmeg and Worcestershire sauce. Stir 3/4 of the cheese mix into the béchamel until melted, then add your noodles.

Pour 1/2 of the mixture into your baking pan, add 1/2 of the langostino tails, top with remaining noodles (this recipe makes about 1/8 cup too much cheese sauce, but I won't tell if you won't). The mix will go all the way to the top, but I love the look of cheese bubbling over the pan! Top with remaining cheese, place on a baking dish to save your oven and bake for 15 minutes or until the cheese is bubbly and brown in spots. Remove from oven, top with a healthy shake of old bay, remaining langostino tails and parsley. Eat right out of the pan with no regrets, and make sure to take a few pics to make your friends jealous!