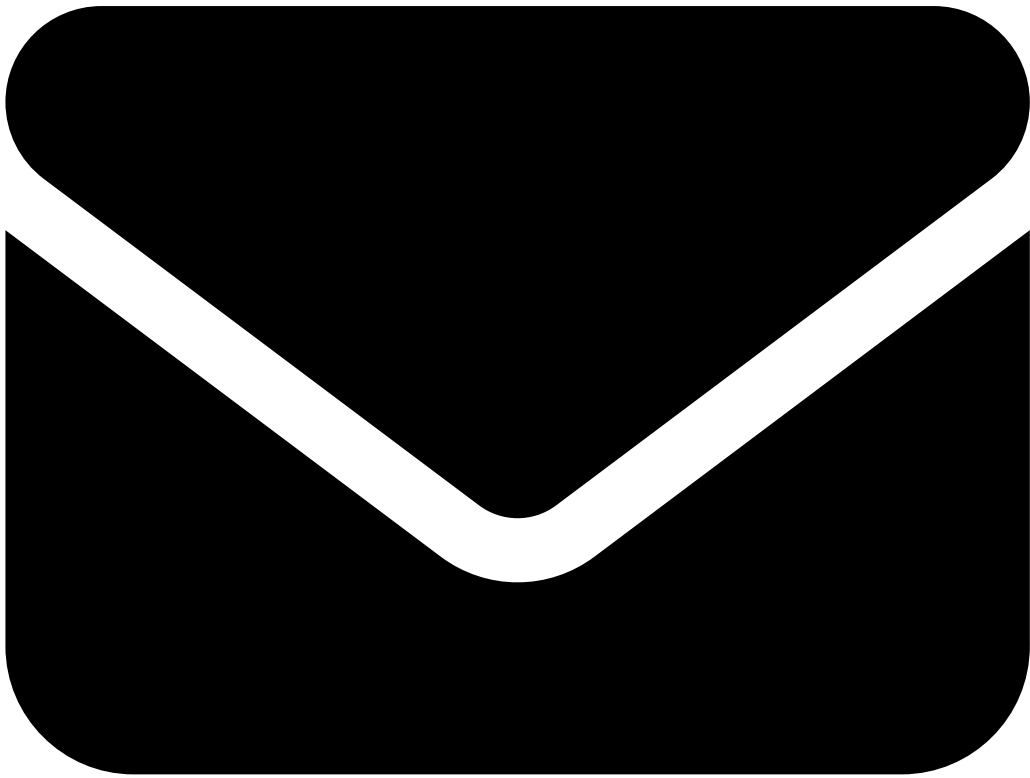


Creamy Italian Mac and Cheese Bake

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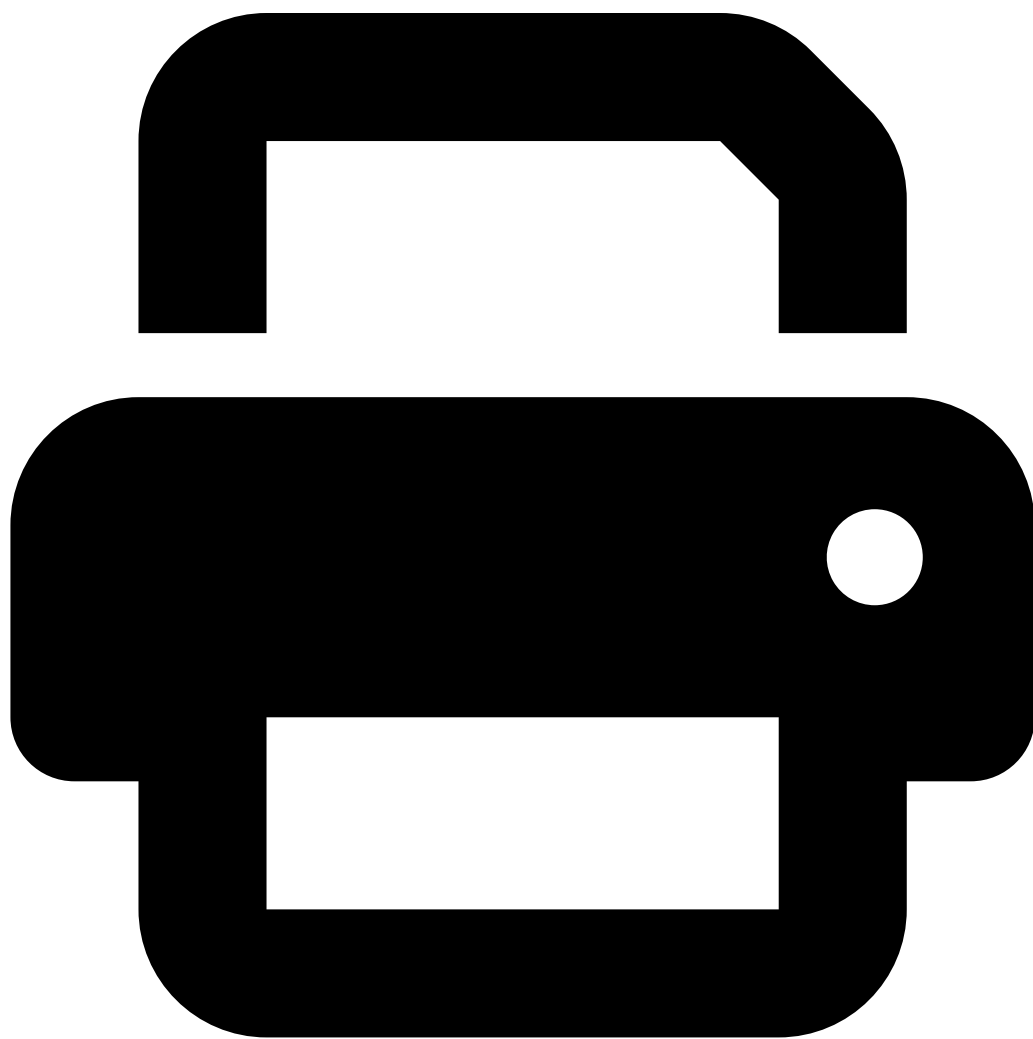
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There's something so comforting about a bubbling dish of mac and cheese coming out of the oven – golden, creamy, and impossibly cheesy. But in our Italian home, even the most classic dishes tend to take on a Mediterranean twist. This **Creamy Italian Mac and Cheese Bake** is my way of giving a familiar American favorite a little Italian soul – rich with Fontina, sharp cheddar, mozzarella, and plenty of Parmesan. It's a dish that feels right at home on any holiday table, especially Thanksgiving.

Growing up, mac and cheese wasn't something we made often. My mom would serve baked pasta dishes layered with cheese and béchamel, but I didn't truly fall in love with mac and cheese until years later, when I realized how easily it could be made the Italian way. One Thanksgiving, after too many side dishes that felt the same, I wanted something creamy and comforting that still fit our family's table – something with the coziness of pasta al forno and the nostalgia of childhood

comfort food. This recipe was born that day, and now it's a staple every year.

The base starts with a simple roux, but instead of plain butter, I melt it with a bit of diced pancetta or prosciutto – just enough to give the sauce a salty, savory depth. The fat renders into the butter, infusing the whole dish with that unmistakable Italian aroma. Then comes the magic: Fontina for smoothness, sharp cheddar for bite, mozzarella for stretch, and Parmesan for that nutty, salty finish.

When it bakes, the top turns crisp and golden while the inside stays luxuriously creamy. It's comfort food through and through – a little rustic, a little elegant, and completely irresistible. On Thanksgiving, it's the first dish to disappear from our table, and I can promise it'll become one of your family's favorite too!!!

Things to know about this Creamy Italian Mac and Cheese Bake

One of my favorite things about this Creamy Italian Mac and Cheese Bake is how easy it is to customize. I love using Fontina, cheddar, mozzarella, and Parmesan, but Asiago, Provolone, or even a little Gorgonzola are delicious options too.

This recipe is perfect for entertaining because you can assemble it a day ahead and refrigerate it until you're ready to bake. Just pop it in the oven until it's hot, bubbly, and golden.

For a vegetarian version, simply leave out the pancetta and add sautéed mushrooms or roasted butternut squash. Whether it's part of your holiday table or a cozy family dinner, this creamy baked pasta is always a crowd-pleaser.

Craving more comforting Italian classics? Try my Spinach and

Mushroom Lasagna with Béchamel Sauce, Roasted Butternut Squash Gnocchi, or Creamy Italian Sausage Risotto next – each one made to warm your heart and your kitchen.

Italian Mac and Cheese bake



This Italian Mac and Cheese Bake is the ultimate comfort food, combining tender pasta with a rich, creamy blend of Italian cheeses and a golden, bubbly topping. Made with Fontina, mozzarella, cheddar, and Parmesan, every bite is smooth, cheesy, and full of flavor. It's an easy family-friendly casserole that's perfect for weeknight dinners, holidays, or potlucks.

- 1 Lb. pounds **short pasta** (cavatappi, shells, or elbow macaroni)
- 3 Tbsp. **unsalted butter**
- 3 oz. **prosciutto or pancetta**
- 3 **all-purpose flour**
- 2 cups **whole milk**
- 1 cup **heavy cream**
- 1 cup **shredded Fontina cheese**
- 1 cup **shredded sharp cheddar cheese**
- 1 cup **shredded mozzarella cheese**
- 1/2 cup **grated Parmesan cheese**, divided
- 2 cloves **garlic** minced

- 1 tsp. **fresh thyme leaves** (or $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp dried)
- pinch of **nutmeg** (optional)
- Salt and black pepper, to taste

Crispy topping

- 1 cup Italian seasoned breadcrumbs
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil

1. Cook the pasta:

Boil in a large stock pot in salted water until *just al dente*. Drain and set aside.

2. Cook the pancetta/prosciutto:

In a large saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Add diced pancetta or prosciutto and cook until lightly crisp and the fat has rendered, about 3–4 minutes.

3. Build the roux:

Stir in the minced garlic and cook 30 seconds. Sprinkle in the flour and whisk for 1 minute, letting it absorb the butter and drippings.

4. Make the sauce:

Gradually pour in the milk and cream while whisking constantly until smooth and slightly thickened, about 4–5 minutes.

5. Add the cheeses:

Lower the heat and stir in Fontina, cheddar, mozzarella, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Parmesan until melted and creamy.

Season with thyme, nutmeg (if using), salt, and pepper.

6. Combine:

Add the cooked pasta to the sauce and stir until well coated.

7. Prepare the topping:

Mix breadcrumbs with Parmesan and olive oil.

8. Bake:

Pour the pasta mixture into a buttered 9×13-inch baking dish. Sprinkle evenly with the breadcrumb topping.

Bake at **375°F (190°C)** for **40–45 minutes**, until bubbly and golden brown.

Main Course

Italian

Italian mac and cheese, baked mac and cheese, creamy macaroni and cheese, Italian cheese pasta bake,