

Recipes extracted from **The Shared Table** by Clare Scrine, published by Smith Street Books.

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ROASTED PUMPKIN MAC 'N' CHEESE WITH WALNUTS AND SAGE

Slow-cooked caramelised onion, roasted pumpkin and a hint of spice give this mac 'n' cheese a subtle sweetness, with crunchy walnuts and crispy sage making it just a little bit more special. The flavour combination is perfect. The trick to making this dish super delicious is to roast the pumpkin until it is brown and very soft, and to caramelize the onions properly— be patient! This version contains a lot of sauce, as the pasta tends to soak up a lot of liquid while it is being finished off in the oven.

Serves 8 · vegan option

INGREDIENTS:

1.5 kg butternut pumpkin, cut into 2 cm chunks

3 tbsp olive oil, plus extra for drizzling

2 large brown onions, sliced

25 g butter or margarine

500 g macaroni or curly pasta

3 tbsp plain (all-purpose) flour

½ tsp ground nutmeg

1 tsp dried tarragon

375 ml (1½ cups) milk (or nut milk)

500 ml (2 cups) vegetable stock

60 g (½ cup) grated cheddar (or vegan cheese/nutritional yeast), plus extra for topping

25 g (¼ cup) grated parmesan (or vegan cheese/nutritional yeast)

1 handful sage leaves, thinly sliced

60 g (½ cup) walnuts, roughly chopped

METHOD:

Preheat the oven to 220°C. Arrange the pumpkin chunks on a large baking tray. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast for about 20–30 minutes, or until soft to touch and dark brown in colour.

Meanwhile, in a saucepan, heat the remaining olive oil over low heat and slowly caramelize the onions, stirring often, for about 15 minutes, until browned. Stir in the butter, cook for a few minutes more, then set aside.

While the onions are slowly caramelising, cook the pasta in a large saucepan of salted, boiling water until almost al dente, but drain it 1–2 minutes before you normally would, as it will continue to soften in the oven. Drain the pasta in a colander, run cold water over it and set aside.

Add the flour, nutmeg and tarragon to the caramelised onion mixture and stir well. Pour in the milk and stock, and stir the sauce until it comes to a simmer and begins to thicken. Add the roasted pumpkin and mix well.

Using a stick blender, whiz the onion and pumpkin mixture until it is completely smooth. Alternatively, you could transfer the mixture to a food processor or blender.

Add the cheddar and parmesan to the sauce and stir until melted. Taste and season to your liking.

Combine the pasta and sauce in a large baking dish. Top with the sage, walnuts and extra cheddar. Drizzle with more olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Bake for 10 minutes, or until the cheddar is melted and the sage is crispy. Serve garnished with fresh herbs if desired.