

JILL'S BAKED MACARONI AND CHEESE

(4 TO 6 Main Course Servings or 8 to 10 side dish servings)

(Can make sauce ahead and blend just before baking macaroni.)

6 CUPS BOILING WATER

1 ½ TEASPOON SALT

2 CUPS UNCOOKED ELBOW MACARONI (8 OUNCES)

2 TABLESPOONS BUTTER

2 TABLESPOONS ALL PURPOSE FLOUR

2 CUPS WHOLE OR SKIM MILK

½ MEDIUM ONION, MINCED

1 BAY LEAF

¼ TEASPOON SWEET PAPRIKA

2 ¼ CUPS GRATED CHEDDAR OR COLBY CHEESE

SALT AND GROUND BLACK PEPPER TO TASTE

1 TABLESPOON BUTTER

½ CUP FRESH BREAD CRUMBS

Bring to a rolling boil in a medium saucepan the water and salt. Add the macaroni and cook just until tender. Drain and remove to a large bowl. Melt the butter in a large saucepan over medium-low heat. Whisk in the flour and continue whisking while cooking for 3 minutes. Gradually whisk in the milk. Stir in the onion, bay leaf, and paprika. Simmer gently, stirring often, for 15 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in 2/3 of the cheese. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Stir in the macaroni. Pour half of the mixture into a sprayed baking dish. Sprinkle with half of the remaining cheese. Top with the remaining macaroni. Top with the remaining cheese. Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a small skillet over medium heat. Add ½ cup fresh bread crumbs. Toss to coat. Sprinkle over the top of macaroni.

Bake at 350 degrees until the breadcrumbs are lightly browned – about 30 minutes. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving.