

A Sutherland Belle

French Onion Mac & Cheese

Serves 6–8*

This recipe takes everything you love about French onion soup — the slow-caramelized onions, the quiet depth, the luxurious warmth — and wraps it into the creamiest baked Mac & cheese. The sauce is silky, the center stays soft and rich, and the pancetta-Parmesan crust adds a salty, golden finish. Serve it family-style in a large baking dish, or bake in individual bowls for a restaurant-worthy presentation.

**This recipe can easily be halved.*

INGREDIENTS

For the Onions

3 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 tablespoons olive oil
3 large yellow onions, thinly sliced
1 teaspoon kosher salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
1 tablespoon dry white wine or sherry

For the Pasta

12 ounces medium shells
½ cup reserved pasta water
4 ounces diced pancetta
3 tablespoons unsalted butter
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2½ cups whole milk
1¼ cups heavy cream
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
2 teaspoons dijon mustard
1½ cups shredded gruyère, divided
1 cup shredded fontina, divided
1½ cups shredded mozzarella
Freshly ground black pepper (do not add salt)

For the Topping

½ cup Gruyère

½ cup Fontina

½ cup freshly grated Parmesan

Reserved crispy pancetta

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Caramelize the onions:** In a large sauté pan, melt butter with olive oil over medium heat. Add onions, salt, pepper, and thyme.
 2. Cook 20–25 minutes, stirring often, until deeply golden and jammy.
 3. Add wine or sherry; cook until fully evaporated. Transfer onions to a bowl and set aside.
 4. **Cook the pasta:** Boil shells in salted water until al dente. Drain and set aside. Reserve ½ cup pasta water.
 5. **Crisp the pancetta:** Return the onion pan to medium heat. Add pancetta; cook until crisp. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside. Lightly wipe the pan, leaving the browned bits for flavor.
 6. **Make the cream sauce:** Add 3 tablespoons butter to the pan; melt. Whisk in flour; cook 1 minute.
 7. Slowly whisk in milk and cream until smooth. Add Worcestershire, dijon, and black pepper. Simmer 3–4 minutes, until slightly thickened.
 8. **Reduce heat to low and melt in the cheeses:** Add 1½ cups gruyère, 1 cup fontina, and all of the mozzarella. Stir until velvety and smooth.
 9. Fold caramelized onions and cooked pasta into the cheese sauce. If too thick, loosen with splashes of reserved pasta water.
 10. **Baking Options: Large Baking Dish (Crowd Style)** Transfer all mac & cheese to a buttered baking dish. Top with ½ cup gruyère, ½ cup fontina, pancetta, and parmesan. Bake at 350°F for 20 minutes. Broil 1–2 minutes until golden. Rest 5 minutes before serving. Garnish with fresh thyme. **Individual Bowls (Presentation Style)** Divide the mac & cheese into 4–6 oven-safe bowls. Top with gruyère, fontina, pancetta, and parmesan. Bake 12–15 minutes at 350°F. Broil briefly to brown. Garnish with fresh thyme.
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STORAGE

Refrigerate: For up to 3 days.

Reheat: Bake covered at 350°F until warmed through, or microwave with a splash of milk.

Freeze: Up to 1 month (best before baking).

