

SPAM MAC AND CHEESE

This one.... I am not sure where it started, but I know it is not a new idea. I do, however, quite clearly remember talking to a coworker about this and he told me about frying up the SPAM first. WOW, what a difference it makes! At some point I started adding canned corn so I could get some sort of veggie in there. Then, for whatever reason, I started adding the canned diced tomato. I have since swapped the corn out with peas so I could get a nice spectrum of color.

INGREDIENTS

<u>Qty.</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Item</u>
1	12 oz. can	SPAM
1	15 oz. can	Peas
1	15 oz. can	Diced Tomatoes (No Salt Added)
1	7.3 oz. Box	Kraft Mac and Cheese
4	TBSP Butter	Land O' Lakes Salted Butter
¼	Cup	Milk
8	Oz.	Shredded Cheese of Choice
AR	-----	Italian Seasoned Panko
AR	-----	Fresh Ground Black Pepper
AR	-----	Neutral oil with high smoke point (e.g. Grapeseed Oil)

The amount of salt in salted butter may vary widely between brands, so I specified the brand I normally use. If I had to do it again, I would probably specify unsalted butter and salt overall mix to taste

There are those who will tell you to grate your own cheese at the time you need it as opposed to using pre-shredded cheese from a bag. The pre-shredded stuff generally has anti-caking agents and mold inhibitors and generally does not melt as well as freshly grated. I dunno. I almost always use Sargento brand shredded cheese and have been pretty happy with it, but maybe next time I will grate my own.

You should be able to find Panko in most grocery stores these days. If not, regular old Italian seasoned bread crumbs should work.

SPECIAL TOOLS

- NONE!

PREPARATION

PHASE I

- 1) Dice the SPAM.
- 2) Drain the canned peas and diced tomatoes.
- 3) Preheat pan to mediumish.
- 4) Lightly coat pan with oil.
- 5) Pan fry the SPAM tossing occasionally. The goal is to get a nice crust on the outside, but still leave it tender on the inside.
- 6) When the SPAM is getting close to being done, start boiling the water for the macaroni.
- 7) Drain the macaroni, but do not rinse.
- 8) Add the butter and milk to the macaroni pot and melt over low heat.
- 9) Add the cheese mix to the milk and butter and mix well.
- 10) Add the peas and tomatoes top the cheese sauce and mix well.
- 11) Add the fried SPAM to the mixture and mix well.
- 12) Add the macaroni to the mixture and mix well.
- 13) Continue to heat the mixture over low heat for somewhere in the neighborhood of 10 minutes stirring occasionally.
- 14) If you want to eat now
 - a. Put the mixture in a bowl and top with shredded cheese and fresh ground pepper to taste.
 - b. ENJOY!
- 15) If you have a little bit more time and want to kick it up a notch, proceed to Phase II.

PHASE II

- 1) Preheat oven to 425 deg. F. [i]
- 2) Spread SPAM Mac and Cheese mixture in a 9" x 13" glass pan.
- 3) Sprinkle approximately 2/3 of the shredded cheese evenly over the mixture
- 4) Sprinkle a generous amount of panko over the mixture. Pay special attention to any areas with exposed mac.
- 5) Sprinkle the remaining cheese on top.
- 6) Put in the oven for about 15 - 20 minutes or until the SPAM Mac and Cheese is nicely golden brown.
- 7) Remove from oven and let sit for about 5 minutes.
- 8) ENJOY!

NOTES

- i. If it takes longer than 10 minutes to pre-heat the oven, no worries! The SPAM Mac and Cheese can continue to heat on low until the oven is ready.
- ii. I don't have pic's for Phase II yet. Sorry!

PICTURES





















