

CHEESE & PASTA GRATIN

Source: The Art of Simple Food Alice Waters

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Serves: 4

Melt, in a heavy skillet:

3 tablespoons butter

Add:

3 tablespoons flour

Cook over very low heat, stirring with a whisk for 3 minutes. The roux should bubble gently.

Whisking constantly, add, little by little:

2 ½ cups milk

Continue whisking until the sauce has the consistency of thick cream. Add:

Salt to taste

Raise the heat to medium, switch to a wooden spoon, and stir continuously until the sauce begins to simmer. Lower the heat and cook, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes.

Melt in a heavy ovenproof skillet:

1 tablespoon butter

Add:

1 ½ cups fresh breadcrumbs (see page 62)

Toss the crumbs to coat with butter and toast in a 350 F oven for 10 to 15 minutes, stirring them every 5 minutes, until lightly browned.

Turn off the heat under the white sauce and stir in:

8 ounces grated cheese

Cook al dente in abundant salted boiling water:

¾ pound short-cut pasta (macaroni, fusilli, penne)

Drain and pour into a buttered gratin dish. Pour the cheese sauce over the pasta and mix until it is well coated. Taste for salt, and adjust as needed. Scatter the toasted breadcrumbs over the top and bake in a 400 F oven for 15 minutes, or until the crumbs are golden brown and the sauce is bubbling.

