Broccoli Mac and Cheese from 101Cookbooks.com

**Ingredients**
- 1 small butternut squash. Peel, seed and cut in tiny chunks
- olive oil
- 1 bunch basil, stems removed
- 2 slices good brown bread, stale or dried out in the oven
- ½ small head of broccoli, roughly chopped
- 4 TBS sour cream
- 1 ¾ grated white cheddar cheese
- 1 ½ cups grated gruyere cheese
- a handful of yellow cherry tomatoes
- 3 cups whole wheat macaroni elbows

**Instructions**
1) Preheat oven to 400° with a rack in the middle. Put large pot of water on to boil. 
2) Meanwhile, pulse half the basil, all of the bread, broccoli and a lug of olive oil in food processor until you’ve got a fine crumb. It’ll be a bit damp—that’s okay. Transfer to a small bowl, and give the processor a rinse.
3) In a separate bowl, combine the sour cream and grated cheese. Place the cherry tomatoes in the food processor with the remaining basil. Pulse a couple times to break things up, then add to the sour cream mixture and stir well.
4) Boil pasta in well-salted water for a bit less time than the package suggests—ever so slightly undercooked. Drain, reserving a big cup of hot water. Return hot pasta to pan; add the cheese mixture. Add squash and stir well. Add pasta water to thin the sauce to the consistency of cream. It can be a bit runny as the pasta will soak it up in the oven.
5) Transfer everything to a large baking dish or casserole. Sprinkle the green breadcrumbs evenly across the top and bake for 20-25 minutes or until the topping is crunchy. Remove from the oven, and wait 10 minutes before serving.

Glorious Mac and Cheese from Glorious One-pot Meals

**Ingredients**
- Olive oil spray
- 2 cups macaroni
- ½ tsp olive oil
- 8 to 12 ounces cheese, such as cheddar, mozzarella, or Monterey Jack, sliced or grated
- 3 to 5 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 TBS chopped fresh oregano, or ½ tsp dried
- sea salt and black pepper
- ½ yellow bell pepper, cored, seeded and cut into thin strips
- ½ head broccoli, cut into florets (about 2 cups)
- 2 handfuls fresh spinach, shredded (about 2 loosely packed cups)
- 2 or 3 plum tomatoes, chopped, or one 14-ounce can, drained, liquid reserved, optional

**Instructions**
1) Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. Spray the inside and lid of a cast-iron Dutch oven with olive oil, taking care to fully coat all interior surfaces. Pour the pasta into the pot.
2) Combine 2/3 cup water and the olive oil in a measuring cup. (If using canned tomatoes, drain and use the liquid to replace the water.) Stir and pour over the pasta. Mix gently to coat all the noodles and spread them evenly in the pot.
3) Layer about half the cheese over the pasta. Sprinkle with half the garlic and half the oregano and lightly season with salt and pepper.
4) Add the bell pepper and broccoli in even layers and cover with the remaining cheese. Sprinkle with the remaining garlic and oregano and season lightly with salt and pepper. Top with the spinach, and if you choose, tomatoes.
5) Cover and bake for 30 minutes, or until 3 minutes after the aroma of a fully cooked meal escapes the oven. Serve immediately.

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Think about Snacks

Do you think eating snacks is a bad thing? It’s not. Your body likes to be fed about every three hours while you’re awake. Snacking on healthy food can help you to:

- Feel more awake all day.
- Do better in at work or school.
- Feel happier.
- Feel like exercising.
- Not get sick as bad or as often.
- Have healthier teeth and skin.
- Get along better with people.
- Maintain a healthy weight.

If you snack on junk food, you might feel tired, have a foggy brain, get angry or sad more easily, get injured more while exercising or playing sports, gain too much weight or get sick. How can you choose healthy snacks?

1. Think whole foods.

What are whole foods? A food that you eat whole, just like nature made it. An apple is a whole food. So are carrots, nuts, grapes, bananas and oranges.

A cow, pig, chicken or turkey can be a whole food—unless the meat has been mixed with other stuff like preservatives or added flavors. The same goes for cheese, plain yogurt and eggs. Milk is a whole food if chocolate or sweeteners have not been added to it. If you read the label on a food and there is only one ingredient, it is probably a whole food.

Whole organic foods are even better. They might cost more but they provide more healthy nutrients. And, no one used chemicals on the food while it was growing. So, you won’t get harmful chemicals in your body—and neither will the people who grew and picked the food for you.

Organic also means that the food has not been genetically modified, which means scientists did things to the food that might make it look better, last longer or taste different. These foods are making people sick. Genetically modified foods are also called GMOs.

2. Think Outside the box

If your snack food comes in a box or a wrapper, it is not as good for you as a whole food. A package of fruit snacks is not the same as a piece of real fruit—even if the wrapper makes it look like it is something that is good for you. The same goes for fast food. Food from McDonalds, Burger King and other places like those has lots of fat, sugar, calories and chemicals in it. They even put fake tastes in these foods with chemicals. Pretty soon, our taste buds want to eat only these junky foods because the fake flavors fool us. But, if you start eating real food again, pretty soon it will taste good and the fake food will taste weird to you.

Whenever you buy food in a package, box or wrapper, read the label. If the food has a long list of ingredients with big words that you don’t understand, it is probably not a good food. You can look online to find out what the big words mean.

3. Think for yourself

The companies that make junk food and fast food spend billions of dollars to get you to eat it. They advertise on TV, on your computer, on your phone, on billboards, in movies, with toys that you like and, sometimes, even in your schools by giving stuff away. They don’t care if you get sick and fat. They just want to make money. Don’t listen to them. Make your own healthy food choices because you are smarter than that!

Snack on Dairy!
- Cheese cubes or string cheese
- Plain yogurt (add your own fruit or whole grain granola)
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Cottage cheese

Snack on Raw Veggies! Try celery, peppers, carrots, summer squash, zucchini, broccoli, cauliflower, green beans, tomatoes, peas.

Or Fruits and Berries! Your favorite, whole or cut up and tossed together.

Snack on Nuts & Seeds!
- Almonds, walnuts, peanuts, cashews and pistachios.
- Natural, unsweetened peanut or other nut butters.
- Sunflower seeds.
- Plain pepitas.

Or 100% Whole Grains! Crackers, breads, low-sugar cereals/granolas, sesame sticks, tortillas, corn chips, low-sugar muffins.

Invent Combinations!
- Whole wheat tortilla pizza with sauce, cheese & green peppers.
- Plain yogurt smoothies. Blend frozen fruit, yogurt and milk.
- Natural, unsweetened peanut butter on 100% whole wheat bread, crackers, celery or apple slices.
- Lettuce burrito. Wrap up sliced cheese, refried beans and chopped veggies in a lettuce leaf.

Think Drinks!
Water is best. It’s what your body is made of. You need eight to ten big glasses a day. Instead of soda pop, try fruity water (add berries, fruit or cucumber slices) or 100% fruit juice. All soda pop weakens your bones and is linked to weight gain. Only drink it once in awhile, or better yet, never again.
Modern wheat is not the wheat your great grandparents baked into breads. Industrialized agriculture has developed hybridized wheat that is easier to harvest and store. This has enormously increased the amounts of gluten and turned wheat from the staff of life into the stuff of illness. In addition, because today’s food system grows a lot of a few crops instead of a little of many, wheat is prevalent everywhere and we have access to few other grains. In times’ past, we ate a variety of grains.

While wheat is no longer good for anybody, eating it causes a wide range of symptoms for many people—everything from digestive difficulties and allergy symptoms to trouble swallowing and joint pain. Some experts believe eating wheat can even worsen conditions like dementia, autism, schizophrenia and ADHD in some people.

Even if you and your family are not experiencing problems with eating wheat, you might consider:

- Eating fewer wheat based products. Instead, eat more fruits and vegetables. A lettuce leaf is a great sandwich wrap! Cauliflower is a great substitute for elbow pasta in mac and cheese.
- Taking a two-week wheat break. See if you feel better.
- Try some other grains or wheat alternatives, e.g. quinoa or chickpea flour pastas, oat or millet flours.
- Instead of noodles, eat brown rice or quinoa as a side dish.

Watch out for all those expensive, gluten free products out there. Cooking from scratch is always your best bet. Most soy and corn is genetically modified, so if you are going to turn to those as staples make sure they are labeled Non-GMO.

For more information on wheat and your diet, read “Wheat Belly” by William Davis, MD.
The current food system in the United States is bad for the environment, bad for public health and primarily benefits the largest agricultural companies. This may not be news to most people, but what is less known is who pays for the current US food system.

Every few years, the US government adopts a new Farm Bill. The most recent Farm Bill, like the previous ones, provides billions of dollars to Big Ag and little to small, family run farms.

The 2014 Farm Bill provides $956 Billion in taxpayer subsidies to huge corporations like Monsanto, Tyson Foods, Archer Daniels Midland, Kraft and Wal-Mart, corporations which make billions in profits annually.

So why does the US government give these corporations so much of the taxpayers’ money? These companies spend millions of dollars lobbying Congress every year and they finance political candidates running for election. For example, in the 2012 election cycle, Monsanto contributed $1,209,714 to candidates. In 2013 alone, they spent nearly $7 million lobbying the US Congress.

(Source: www.opensecrets.org)

In Michigan, 2012 farm subsidies provided by taxpayers totaled $263 million, with most of that money going to large farms growing mono-crops or livestock: corn subsidies, $59 million; soybeans, $35 million; and the dairy sector, more than $22 million.

(Source: http://farm.ewg.org/)

While providing huge subsidies to agribusiness, the 2014 Farm Bill cut $8.6 billion in Food Assistance. During a time when more and more Americans live in poverty and rely on government food assistance programs, Congress decided to drastically cut these funds and give more taxpayer money to large corporations.

What we need is a food system that is based on food justice, where food is a right and the government does not punish marginalized communities but provides them access to healthy, nutritious food. We need to promote and practice food sovereignty, giving everyone a voice in deciding what kind of food system they want for their community. This is what Our Kitchen Table both promotes and practices through their food growing and food justice work.

To get involved contact Our Kitchen Table.

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