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# Food Connects Us

2025 NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH<sup>®</sup>  
A Campaign by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Non-Metro New Mexico Area Agency on Aging

Nutrition Corner

## Connect with Food

Preparing foods at home gives us the opportunity to control the ingredients, amounts, and how the food is made. Learning skills in cooking, food preparation, and meal planning allows you to:

- substitute lower cost ingredients.
- increase the nutritional value of some meals by adding fruits and vegetables.
- in some cases, allows you to use lesser amounts of sugar and fats.

Exploring where our food comes from allows us to know how our food is grown or raised, and may inspire gardening at home.



## Connect to Culture and Memories

Learning about the history or tradition behind the food you eat can be a valuable experience. It can help connect to the person who prepared the food, learn about sustainability, or learn how it affects your health.

Food connects us to memories of special occasions and special people. New memories can be created by preparing and cooking together. Trying new recipes may be the perfect pathway in creating memories. "Remember when ....."?

## Connect to Your Health

Although the amount of nutrients change from when we're infants to older adults, they play an important part at all stages of life.

- ◆ Calcium helps bones grow and stay strong, helping to prevent osteoporosis.
- ◆ Protein helps build strong muscles when we're young. However, as we grow older, our bodies lose muscle mass, which is why we need to pay special attention to our protein intake.
- ◆ Complex carbohydrates help promote healthy brain function and are used as the main source of energy.

Choose whole foods with lots of variety to get a full range of nutrients. Research foods and their nutritional benefits to learn more.

## Connect to Each Other

The social interaction while eating with others has shown to provide many benefits such as:

1. reducing isolation
2. improving nutrition by making better food choices and eating more (avoiding malnutrition)
3. reducing depression
4. stimulating cognitive function
5. enhancing digestion by eating slower
6. strengthening relationships

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# Healthy Mac and Cheese Recipe

Recipe from Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Servings: 4

Serving Size: 1 cup



## Ingredients

8 ounces whole-grain macaroni noodles, uncooked  
1 tablespoon butter spread  
1 tablespoon whole-wheat flour  
10 ounce bag (2 cups) cubed frozen butternut squash, thawed  
2 ounces (½ cup packed) reduced-fat shredded cheddar cheese

## Directions

*Before you begin: Wash your hands.*

1. Boil noodles according to directions. Drain and reserve 2 cups pasta water.
2. In pot over medium heat, cook butter spread with flour for 1 to 2 minutes.
3. Whisk in 1 cup pasta water.
4. Add squash and cook/mash until smooth. (Note: Add more pasta water as needed for a smooth cheese-like consistency.)
5. Add cheese and stir until melted.
6. Fold in cooked noodles until combined.

## Comparison of Nutrition Facts:



### Healthy Mac and Cheese

Calories: 300; Total Fat: 6g; Saturated Fat: 2.5g;  
Cholesterol: 10mg; Sodium: 290mg; Total Carbohydrate: 53g; Dietary Fiber: 6g; Sugars: 2g; Protein: 13g.

### Simple Mac and Cheese (Allrecipes)

Calories: 630; Total Fat: 34g; Saturated Fat: 21 g;  
Cholesterol: 100mg; Sodium: 777mg; Total Carbohydrate: 55g; Dietary Fiber: 2g; Sugars: 8g; Protein: 27g

## Butternut Squash

Butternut squash is often treated as a vegetable but is actually a fruit that grows on a vine. It tends to have a nutty, sweet, earthy flavor and can be added to soups, salads, stews and even baked goods.

There are many ways to prepare butternut squash such as roasting, microwaving, steaming, and sautéing.

It is low in calories but packed with nutrients including:

**Fiber, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin E, B Vitamins, Magnesium, Potassium**

Try Butternut Squash in this month's recipe!



## Mac and Cheese Fun Facts

- ◆ The earliest recorded Mac and Cheese recipe was written in 1769 by a British chef.
- ◆ Thomas Jefferson brought Mac and Cheese recipes to America after visiting Italy.
- ◆ It became popular during the Great Depression in 1937 when Kraft produced the first boxed macaroni.
- ◆ Roughly one million boxes of Kraft Mac and Cheese are sold each day.
- ◆ National Mac and Cheese Day is July 14th.
- ◆ In 1993, Crayola officially added the color “macaroni and cheese”.
- ◆ The largest Mac and Cheese Dish was made in 2010 and weighed 2,469 pounds, including 575 pounds of cooked macaroni and 286 pounds of mixed cheese.