

# HIGH PROTEIN MAC AND CHEESE

*The cottage cheese version your kids won't notice*

ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	SERVINGS	PROTEIN / SERVING	COST / SERVING
10 min	25 min	4	38-45 g	~\$2.80

## INGREDIENTS

- 12 oz pasta (elbows, cavatappi, or penne; sub Banza or Barilla Protein+ for extra protein)
- 1 cup full-fat cottage cheese
- 1.5 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1/2 cup whole milk (Fairlife adds extra protein)
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp mustard powder (or 1 tsp Dijon)
- 1/2 tsp apple cider vinegar (or lemon juice)
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- Optional: hot sauce, smoked paprika, or everything bagel seasoning

## INGREDIENT NOTE

Low-fat cottage cheese works, but full-fat produces a creamier sauce. If you only have large-curd cottage cheese, blend it a few seconds longer than you think you need to.

## PROTEIN BOOST

Regular pasta + full-fat cottage cheese + sharp cheddar = about 38 g protein per serving.  
Swap in Banza or Barilla Protein+ pasta and push it to 50 g per serving.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Salt pasta water well before adding pasta. It should taste like a light broth. Unsalted water makes flat mac and cheese.
2. Cook pasta to al dente per package directions. Before draining, reserve 1/4 cup pasta water.
3. While pasta cooks, add cottage cheese and milk to a blender or deep bowl with an immersion blender. Blend 45-60 seconds until completely smooth.
4. Drain pasta and return it to the pot over LOW heat.
5. Add blended cottage cheese mixture, cheddar, garlic powder, mustard powder, and reserved pasta water. Stir continuously for 2-3 minutes until fully melted and coating the pasta.
6. Add apple cider vinegar, stir, then taste for salt. This small acid lifts the dairy and stops it from tasting flat.
7. Serve immediately. Leftovers reheat well with 1 tbsp milk stirred in per serving.

## NO BLENDER?

Mash cottage cheese with a fork until mostly smooth. Small curds dissolve in the hot pasta. Final texture lands at about 85% of the blended version.

## COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

**Skipping the blend.** Unblended curds do not disappear in heat. You will end up with lumpy sauce. Take the 60 seconds to blend.

**Unsalted pasta water.** Where most home cooks lose flavor before they start. If the water does not taste seasoned, the pasta won't either.

**High heat when finishing.** Dairy proteins seize above a certain temperature and the sauce splits into a greasy mess. Keep it on LOW.

**Forgetting the acid.** Half a teaspoon of vinegar or lemon is not detectable as vinegar. It is the step that makes the dish taste finished instead of bland.

FRIDGE	FREEZER	LEFTOVER MOVE
4-5 days in an airtight container. Reheat with 1 tbsp milk per serving on medium-low, stirring.	Don't. The dairy sauce separates on thaw and doesn't come back together.	Top with breadcrumbs + olive oil, bake at 375F for 15 min. Baked mac, zero extra effort.