



Totally Tomato Mac 'n Cheese Cupcakes

By Erin Fletter

Prep Time 40 / **Cook Time** 32 / **Serves** 4 - 6

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

boil: to cook a food in liquid heated to the point of gas bubbles and steam forming (boiling point is 212 F at sea level).

chop: to cut something into small, rough pieces using a blade.

knife skills: Bear Claw (growl), Pinch, Plank, and Bridge (look out for trolls).

whisk: to beat or stir ingredients vigorously with a fork or whisk to mix, blend, or incorporate air.

Equipment

- Oven
- Muffin pan
- Paper cupcake liners (optional)
- Medium or large pot
- Dry measuring cups
- Colander or strainer
- Mixing bowls (2)
- Cutting board + kid-safe knife
- Liquid measuring cup
- Measuring spoons
- Whisk
- Wooden spoon

Ingredients

Totally Tomato Mac 'n Cheese Cupcakes

- 1 1/2 C dried elbow macaroni noodles ******(for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub gluten-free/nut-free macaroni or other tube-shaped pasta)******
- 4 C water
- 1 large ripe tomato
- 2 eggs ******(Omit for EGG ALLERGY + use paper cupcake liners)******
- 2 C grated cheddar cheese ******(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub dairy-free/nut-free cheese shreds, like Daiya brand)******
- 2 T softened butter ******(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub dairy-free/nut-free butter, like Earth Balance, or vegetable oil)******
- 3/4 C plain full-fat yogurt ******(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub dairy-free/nut-free plain yogurt)******
- 1/4 C whole milk ******(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub dairy-free/nut-free milk)******
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 3/4 tsp mustard powder
- 1/4 tsp ground black pepper
- 1 to 2 T all-purpose flour ******(for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub gluten-free/nut-free all-purpose flour)******

Food Allergen Substitutions

Totally Tomato Mac 'n Cheese Cupcakes

Gluten/Wheat: Substitute gluten-free/nut-free macaroni or other tube-shaped pasta. Substitute gluten-free/nut-free all-purpose flour.

Dairy: Substitute dairy-free/nut-free plain yogurt. Substitute dairy-free/nut-free milk.

Egg: Omit eggs + use paper cupcake liners.

Instructions

Totally Tomato Mac 'n Cheese Cupcakes

boil + drain + preheat

To a medium or large pot, add **4 cups of water**. Bring water to a boil. Add **1 1/2 cups dried elbow macaroni** noodles and cook until pasta is al dente. Drain and set the cooked noodles aside. Preheat your

oven to 350 F.

chop + whisk + add + mix

Chop **1 tomato** and add to a mixing bowl. Crack and whisk **2 eggs** in a large bowl. Mix in **2 cups of grated cheddar cheese**.

measure + whisk

To the egg and cheese mixture, measure and whisk in **2 tablespoons butter, 3/4 cup yogurt, 1/4 cup milk, 1 teaspoon salt, 3/4 teaspoon mustard powder, 1/4 teaspoon black pepper,** and **1 to 2 tablespoons flour**. Whisk well to combine.

combine + stir

Add the cooked and drained elbow macaroni to the cheese and milk mixture. Stir to combine. Then, add the chopped tomatoes and gently fold them in to combine.

grease + bake + cool

Grease the 12 wells of your muffin pan or line with paper cupcake liners. Divide the tomato mac' n cheese mixture among the muffin pan wells. Sprinkle each cupcake with more cheddar cheese. Slide into the oven and bake for about 25 minutes, or until golden brown and bubbly. Let cool slightly before serving!

Featured Ingredient: Tomato!

Hi! I'm Tomato!

"I'm a beautiful, juicy red Tomato. Do you pronounce my name: "tuh-may-tow" or "tuh-mah-tow?" Either way you slice it (or say it), we tomatoes are wonderfully adaptable. You'll find us fresh or cooked on sandwiches, in salads, tacos, soups, stews, sauces, and much more."

History & Etymology

The tomatoes we have now descended from the pea-size fruit of wild plants that grew in western South America. Mesoamericans were the first to domesticate the tomato plant sometime before 500 BCE.

Hernán Cortés, a Spanish conquistador, may have brought tomatoes back to Europe in the 16th century after conquering the Aztec city, Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City).

Tomatoes cultivated in North American colonies in the early 1700s may have been introduced from the Caribbean. Thomas Jefferson also brought tomato seeds back from France. Before tomatoes were used in cooking, the plants were used ornamentally due to some people's beliefs that they were poisonous. One reason for this error was that tomatoes come from the nightshade family, including the belladonna plant (or deadly nightshade), which has highly toxic leaves and berries. Another reason may be that the pewter plates they used back then adversely reacted to the acid in tomato juice.

China is by far the largest producer of tomatoes in the world. In the United States, California and Florida

produce the most tomatoes.

The American and British pronunciations of "tomato" were made famous by an Ira and George Gershwin song from 1937 called "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off." Americans pronounce the word "tuh-may-tow," and the British say "tuh-mah-tow."

The word "tomato" comes from the Spanish, French, or Portuguese "tomate," from the Nahuatl "tomatl."

Anatomy

The tomato is a berry from the tomato plant (*Solanum Lycopersicum*), a perennial vine. It is part of the Solanaceae family, like the potato, pepper, eggplant, and petunia. Since it is a berry, it is a fruit, although mainly used as a vegetable.

A tomato's color is usually red but can also be yellow, orange, green, or purple. Tomatoes can be spherical, oval, or pear-shaped. Their flesh is pulpy with cavities, called locules, that hold the seeds.

There are more than 10,000 tomato varieties. Some are hybrids, and some are heirlooms. An heirloom tomato is a variety that has been grown for generations on a family farm rather than commercially.

Unfortunately, in the past 40 years, many heirloom varieties have been lost, along with the smaller family farms that grew them. However, hundreds of heirloom tomato varieties are still available.

How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

If you are growing your own tomatoes, pick them from the vine while still firm, with a slight give, and before their ripe color (usually red) deepens too much. While holding the fruit, twist it off the stem until it snaps off. The leaf on top of the tomato (the calyx) and part of the stem will come with it. You can also snip it off using garden scissors.

When you choose tomatoes at the store, pick fruit that has smooth, brightly colored skin with no cracks or bruises, is firm but gives with slight pressure, is heavy for its size, and has a pleasant, aromatic smell.

Avoid tomatoes with pale or dark spots.

Store tomatoes at room temperature, as their flavor will decrease in a refrigerator's cold temperature. Wait to wash them until you are ready to use them.

If you plan to make a tomato sauce or soup using fresh, raw tomatoes, you will want to peel them first.

This can be difficult without some preparation: First, put a pot of water on the stove to boil and fill a large bowl with cold or icy water. Next, after washing the tomatoes, use your knife to cut a shallow 'X' through the skin at the top or bottom of each one. Then use a slotted spoon to place the tomatoes into the boiling water until the skin begins to loosen and peel back at the incision, about 30 to 60 seconds. Finally, immediately dunk them into the ice water. The skin should peel easily now. You can also remove the seeds by cutting the peeled tomatoes in half and scooping the seeds out with a spoon.

Tomatoes are versatile vegetables for cooking. Ripe tomatoes can be prepared fresh, stuffed, baked, boiled, or stewed, and they are the base for many sauces. You can also pickle green, unripe tomatoes, add them to salsa or bread and fry them.

Nutrition

Tomatoes are a moderate source of vitamin C, and cooked tomatoes are high in lycopene, an antioxidant, which may help protect your body's cells from damage, strengthen your immune system, and prevent some diseases.