

THE SILENT JOURNEY NEWSLETTER.©

VOL. 001
7TH EDITION
November/2019

Veggie Mac and cheese recipe

In this column I will give you the ingredients. In the left column on the next page I will provide the step-by-step directions.

1 cup dried whole-wheat elbow macaroni

2 teaspoon olive oil,

1 medium red bell pepper chopped,

8 ounces broccoli florets, chopped,

2 small yellow summer squash or zucchini (about 8 ounces total) thinly sliced crosswise,

¼ cup water, 1 cup fat free half-and-half, ½ cup low sodium vegetable broth,

2 tablespoons plus 2 tps all-purpose flour,

¼ teaspoon sea salt,

¼ teaspoon pepper,

2/3 cup shredded low-fat Cheddar cheese,

2 tsp shredded low-fat Monterey Jack cheese,

2 tsp plain dried bread crumbs (lowest sodium available)

Happy Thanksgiving! Let's try to eat less this holiday.

One of my favorite times of the year is the Thanksgiving Holidays. Like everyone, I love spending time with family. But let's be honest with ourselves. Americans love Thanksgiving because of the food we eat with our loved ones.

That delicious smell of turkey permeating though out the house. The busy shuffle of feet and slight whispers coming from the kitchen. The hustle and bustle of friends and family arriving for the feast. As the youngest child in my family, I was always told, "not yet, go back to the living room." But mom always felt sorry for me. She would sneak and give me a little taste of turkey or stuffing. Like I said, I am the youngest child.



During our family Thanksgiving meals, eating a lot of food was a badge of honor. Especially for my mother. The more we ate was a single of how much we enjoyed her food. Make no mistake, we enjoyed her meal. We enjoyed the turkey, stuffing, greens, mac-n-cheese, ham, rolls, gravy and of course that fabulous sweet potato pie.

There was a prayer of thanks and the feast was on. Without a doubt, the meal was a culmination of the hard work my mom took pleasure in preparing. Her pleasure was all over her face. She insisted my dad eat more food, asked the kids if they wanted thirds...seconds were a given.

What we didn't know at the time was, the amount of damage that was being done to our eating habits and our bodies. We ate way past our capacity to absorb what we were consuming. In hindsight, the amount of sodium our little bodies ingested had to be off the charts. My mother thought sodium was the only seasoning.

Despite mom's use of sodium, her food tasted incredible. But during those days, health concerns were for the old. Food was to be enjoyed. Thanksgiving was the end all, be all, feast of the year. And you had to have your plate dripping with food.

Veggie mac and cheese recipe can't

1 Prepare the pan using the pasta package directions, omitting the salt and oil. Lightly spray a 13x9x2 -inch baking dish.

2 Meanwhile preheat the oven to 350°F

3 In large skillet, heat the oil over medium heat, swirling to coat the bottom. Cook the bell pepper for 2 to 3 minutes, or until tender crisp, stirring occasionally. Stir in the broccoli and squash. Cook for 1 minute. Stir in the water. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, or until tender, stirring occasionally.

4 Meanwhile, in a small bowl, whisk together the half-and-half, broth, flour, salt, and pepper. Pour into the cooked bell pepper mixture. Increase the heat to medium high and bring to a simmer, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat. Stir in the Cheddar and Monterey Jack until melted. Stir into the past. Sprinkle with the breadcrumbs.

5 Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the casserole is heated through and the top is golden brown.

It's obvious in the picture on the above page I had a love affair with food. I was 240 pounds in that picture. According to my BMI (body



mass index) for my 5'11 ½" body, I (a male) should be 173 pounds. Unfortunately, that's not the case. But, for the first time in 30 years, I am under 200 pounds. Of course, that weight loss happened after a heart attack and a quadruple bypass.

That's the reason I focused on Thanksgiving Day meals we ate at my parents' home. I experience what many Americans lived through as a child. A time in our history when food during the holidays were abundant and children were expected to eat everything on their plates.

For me, it established the way I approached food. Highly seasoned and at least two helpings. As I have come to learn, it's not how we should eat our meals. Read any dietary regulations and you will get many answers on what a portion of food is. For me, a portion of food is less than the size of my palm. By that standard, I eat much less than I did in the past.

As you enjoy your Thanksgiving meal in a few weeks, consider what you will eat. Also, think about how much you will eat. For me, I plan to eat mac-n-cheese. But it won't be more than a tablespoon full. I love turkey, so I will have a couple helpings of that. What I do is pick and choose my portions.

Sure, it's okay to eat a good meal on Thanksgiving. The key is to remember your health before you fall into a turkey coma. We've all been there. The game is on, dishes are being cleaned and your eyes get droopy. You bob and weave, yet the turkey always wins in the end. You fall asleep before kickoff or that movie you want to watch on Netflix.

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