**Basic Mac and Cheese**

For the béchamel:

* 2 cups whole milk
* 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
* 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
* 1 ½ tsp. kosher salt (or ¾ tsp. fine salt)

To assemble:

* Kosher salt
* ½ box elbow macaroni (1 ½ cups uncooked)
* 4 ounces shredded 2-year aged sharp cheddar cheese (2 cups shredded)

Breadcrumb topping:

* ¼ cup breadcrumbs
* 2 tbsp. butter

Heat oven to 350.

**For the béchamel:**

1. In a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the flour and whisk constantly until the mixture turns light brown in color, about 3 minutes.
2. While whisking constantly, slowly add the milk to the flour mixture until evenly combined and smooth. (It will get very thick when you first add the milk, then thin out.)
3. Return the saucepan to medium-high heat and while whisking constantly, cook until the sauce thickens and coats the back of a spoon. Stir in salt, taste, and add salt as desired. Remove from the heat and stir in cheese until melted, set aside.

**To assemble:**

1. Bring a large pot of heavily salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the pasta and cook until it’s almost al dente (just on the edge of being underdone), 6 minutes then drain and rinse with cold water; set aside.
2. Add the pasta to the béchamel and cheese mixture and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until the pasta is heated through and steaming, about 2 to 4 minutes transfer to a baking dish, sprinkle with the breadcrumbs, and bake until bubbling and brown on top, about 25 to 30 minutes.