

MAC & CHEESE FEST

@YYC.macandcheesefest

CALGARY MAC & CHEESE FESTIVAL

DRINK PAIRING GUIDE



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Boost your sales and create a memorable guest experience by pairing your mac & cheese with the right beverage. A thoughtful pairing elevates the dining experience, highlights your dish's unique flavours, and encourages customers to spend more. Use this guide to craft fun and profitable pairings across wine, beer, cider, spirits, and non-alcoholic options.

PAIRING BEST PRACTICES

Match the Intensity: Match the intensity of the beverage with the strength of the cheese and other ingredients for a harmonious pairing.

What Grows Together, Goes Together: Pairing drinks and ingredients from the same region often creates a natural flavour synergy.

Balance the Flavours: Balance the richness of the cheese with the acidity, bitterness, or sweetness of a drink to enhance both elements.

WHITE WINE PAIRINGS

Chardonnay

Best For: Classic creamy mac & cheese.

Why: Its buttery, oaky notes complement the rich, velvety cheese sauce, while its acidity cuts through the dish's richness.

Off-Dry Riesling

Best For: Spicy mac & cheese with jalapeños or chilies.

Why: The slight sweetness balances spice, while the acidity refreshes the palate.

Chablis

Best For: Mac & cheese with sharper cheeses or lighter preparations.

Why: Crisp and tangy, it enhances delicate flavours and balances heaviness.

RED WINE PAIRINGS

Grenache

Best For: Classic and Vegetarian mac & cheese

Why: Juicy notes of strawberry and raspberry create a “ketchup & KD” vibe.

Pinot Noir

Best For: Meat-loaded mac & cheese.

Why: Low tannins and berry notes pair well with cheese while standing up to savoury proteins.

Zinfandel

Best For: BBQ mac & cheese.

Why: Its bold, fruity flavours and spice notes complement smoky, hearty dishes.

SPARKLING WINE PAIRINGS

Champagne (Blanc de Blancs)

Best For: "Fancy" mac & cheese with nutty or aged cheeses.

Why: Effervescence cuts through richness, and acidity enhances cheese flavours.

Prosecco or Sparkling Cider

Best For: Rich and salty mac & cheese.

Why: Sweet-tart balance complements salty cheeses.

BEER PAIRINGS

Pale Lager or Hoppy Lager

Best For: Mild mac & cheese.

Why: Light, crisp flavours balance richness without overpowering.

Brown or Amber Ale

Best For: Meat-based mac & cheese, or recipes with aged and bold cheeses.

Why: The malty, caramel, and smoky notes of the ale complement savoury meats and stand up to strong cheese flavours.

Fruity Beers or Hops-Forward Beers

Best For: Blue cheese or spicy mac & cheese.

Why: Sweetness balances spice; hops amplify floral and earthy notes.

CIDER PAIRINGS

Apple Cider

Best For: Cheddar-heavy mac & cheese.

Why: Sweet-tart balance complements savoury richness.

Pear Cider

Best For: Goopy, creamy mac & cheese.

Why: Adds a refreshing element with mild sweetness.

SPIRITS PAIRINGS

Bourbon

Best For: Smoky mac & cheese or BBQ variations.

Why: Vanilla and caramel notes complement smoky or spicy dishes.

Gin

Best For: Lighter cheese dishes like goat cheese mac.

Why: Herbal and citrus notes add freshness to creamy dishes.

**CHEESE POWDER COCKTAIL
RIM OR CHEESE FOAM... ANYONE?**

NON-ALCOHOL PAIRINGS

Lemonade (Herbal Infused)

Best For: Light cheeses like Brie or goat cheese.

Why: Acidity balances richness, and herbs add complexity.

Carbonated Flavored Water

Best For: Aged cheeses like cheddar or gouda.

Why: Effervescence cuts through richness, while fruitiness enhances cheese flavours.

Grape, Cranberry or Pear Juice

Best For: Manchego or sharper cheeses.

Why: Tart sweetness complements nutty, grassy cheese notes.

**SWEET MEETS SAVOURY:
THE ULTIMATE DUO!**