

YYC MAC & CHEESE FEST

@YYC.macandcheesefest

YYC MAC & CHEESE FESTIVAL

BEST PRACTICES



Jan 19-31, 2025

WELCOME

You're officially a part of the inaugural YYC Mac & Cheese Festival!



We're thrilled to have you join us in making this January unforgettable for Calgarians through celebrating Canada's de facto national food. Together, we're bringing the city warmth, comfort, and the best mac & cheese creations in town!

Here's a short guide to help you prepare and **make the most out of your participation** in the festival.

IMPORTANT DATES

December 31: Early bird sign up ends

January 15: Festival promotion materials available for download

January 19 - 31: Festival start and end dates

February 1: Voting closes

February 7: Calgary's Best Mac & Cheese winners are officially announced!

We are updating our website with participants and menus on a first come basis. The sooner you submit your details, the better your visibility and the lower the chance of similar dishes!

NEXT STEPS

BEFORE THE FESTIVAL

Festival Dates: January 19-31

- **Submit Your Dish Details:** Submit the details of your mac & cheese dish so we can start sharing your dish with our audience! You can be as creative as you want! Consider adding a fun drink pairing as an upsell to increase your revenue (find suggestions on drink pairings at document's end).
 - Email the following to info@calgarymacandcheesefest.com
 - dish name
 - dish description (and any additional info like gluten free, vegan, etc.)
 - dish price
 - optional drink pairing (as an upsell)
 - photo(s) of dish (the higher quality photo the better you'll look)
- **Content Creation (Premium Cheese Package Only):** Our team will reach out shortly to schedule your video shoot! Be ready to showcase your best dish and your restaurant's unique vibe!
- **Social Media Features:** Keep an eye out for posts on @YYC.Sociables and @yyc.macandcheesefest. Make sure you're following! We'll follow you back. Share our posts with your audience to maximize festival visibility.
- **Print off your festival materials:** We will send you visuals to print for in-house advertising including a QR code.
- **Prepare your staff:** Explain your dish to your staff and ask that they encourage patrons to try the dish and vote during the festival dates.

DISH SUBMISSION

- ☐ **Dish name** “Bacon Mac & Cheese”
 - ☐ **Dish description** “A three cheese blend of with cavatappi noodles and crispy bacon topping”
 - ☐ **Optional drink pairing** “Ol’ Beautiful lager”
 - ☐ **Dish price** “\$18”
 - ☐ **Attach high quality photo(s)**
(the better the quality the more interest in your dish)
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- Email to **info@calgarymacandcheesefest.com** before January 19.
 - The sooner you submit your dish the more advertising you’ll get! We want to encourage people to make reservations at your restaurant for the week of the festival.
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CHEESY INSPIRATION

Feel free to use any of these as inspiration for your dish!

- pulled-pork
- 10 cheese
- homestyle
- unique pasta noodle
- deconstructed
- Mexican
- bacon
- jalapeno
- buffalo chicken
- cheeseburger
- classic
- pizza
- gnocchi
- butternut squash
- Cajun
- goat cheese
- chili
- mac and cheese cups
- blue cheese
- sundried tomato
- mac and cheese balls
- truffle
- bbq sauce
- prosciutto
- pancetta
- fondue
- beer
- turkey
- southern
- baked
- dessert
- stuffed
- ranch
- broccoli
- seafood
- shrimp
- roasted red pepper
- sausage
- velveeta
- lobster
- crab
- spinach
- artichoke
- mushroom
- carbonara
- low fat
- vegan
- gluten-free
- dairy-free
- healthy
- cauliflower
- sloppy joe
- donuts
- grilled chicken
- smokey chipotle
- Dorito
- and anything else you can think of!

FAQ's

When do I have to have my Mac & Cheese dish ready?

A) While it will be need to be ready for customers to order from Jan 19-31st, you'll have to have your dish nailed down prior to the festival start date so that we may advertise it as part of the festival. The sooner you do that, the more exposure you'll receive.

Do I make a new mac & cheese dish or do I use one already listed on my menu?

A) This is up to you! The advantage of a new dish means you can get creative with it and is a limited time offer to drive customers in. However, if you already have a mac & cheese dish you are proud of and confident in, feel free to use that. (See best practices document for inspiration).

Can I enter multiple mac & cheese dishes?

No, just to keep things simple, we ask that you only enter one Mac & Cheese dish. If you have multiple locations under the same brand, we'd ask that all locations enter the same dish. This helps simplify the voting process. (The exception being if you have multiple restaurants under completely different brands, then you can enter dishes for each. You'll have to register each separately though).

Can I make a dessert mac & cheese?!

Yes! While it's unlikely to win best mac & cheese it is great for exposure / attention to your restaurant as a wacky dish! (Note, we don't have good examples of this, but it was a question we received.)

Does it have to be a traditional mac & cheese or can I make a spin off?

Spin offs are okay as long as at the heart of it, it's a mac & cheese. E.g. Mac & Cheese balls, waffle mac & cheese. If you're not sure, feel free to email!

FAQ's

What do I need to submit?

- ☐ Name of dish
- ☐ Dish description
- ☐ Allergies (gluten free, dairy free, nuts)
- ☐ Price
- ☐ Optional drink pairing (upsell for customers)
- ☐ Photo(s) of dish (more photos give us more options to work with)

Where do I send the dish info?

info@calgarymacandcheesefest.com

Where do festival attendees vote?

Via a link on our website calgarymacandcheesefest.com. They can also use a QR code provided to you.

What are the award categories?

As this is the first year, there is only 1 category "Best Mac & Cheese." There will be however 1st, 2nd and 3rd place awarded.

What do the competition winners get?

Pride in winning! Plus it's recommended you leave your mac & cheese dish on your menu to allow for an increase in customers in February to try your winning dish!

I have more questions!

You can reach us at info@calgarymacandcheesefest.com

BEST PRACTICES

DURING THE FESTIVAL

Festival Dates: January 19-31

1) Promote Enthusiasm for the Festival & Your Dish within your Restaurant:

Share the excitement with your staff so they can pass it on to your customers. A passionate recommendation to order the dish can make all the difference!

2) Use Social Media to Grow Attention to the Festival and your Dish: Promote your dish by tagging @yyc.sociables, @sarah.sociables & @yyc.macandcheesefest and using the festival hashtag (#yycmaccheesefest2025). Engage with comments and shares to amplify visibility.

3) Encourage People who Order your Dish to vote: Remind staff to politely ask guests to rate your dish via the QR code or by visiting calgarymacandcheesefest.com. Voting takes under 1 minute and voters are entered to win a gift card to Springbank Cheese!

4) Engage Your Customers for more Positive Exposure: Turn guests into advocates! Ask diners to post pictures of your dish on social media and tag your restaurant and the festival for a chance to be featured and win a prize.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Website

calgarymacandcheesefest.com

Instagram

@YYC.MacandCheeseFest

@YYC.Sociables

@Sarah.Sociables

Email

info@calgarymacandcheesefest.com



BONUS BEVERAGE PAIRING GUIDE

Pairing your mac and cheese dish with the right beverage elevates the dining experience, highlighting the dish's flavours, while offering variety for your guests. Use this guide to craft fun pairings across wine, beer, cider, spirits, and non-alcoholic beverages.

WHITE WINE PAIRINGS

Chardonnay

Best For: Classic creamy mac and 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 and cheese with jalapeños or chilies.
Why: The slight sweetness balances spice, while the acidity refreshes the palate.

Chablis

Best For: Mac and cheese with sharper cheeses or lighter preparations.
Why: Crisp and tangy, it enhances delicate flavors and balances heaviness.

SPARKLING WINE PAIRINGS

Champagne (Blanc de Blancs)

Best For: Fancy mac and cheese with nutty or aged cheeses.
Why: Effervescence cuts through richness, and acidity enhances cheese flavors.

Prosecco or Sparkling Cider

Best For: Rich & salty mac and cheese recipes.
Why: Sweet-tart balance complements salty cheeses.

RED WINE PAIRINGS

Grenache

Best For: Vegetarian mac and cheese
Why: Juicy notes of strawberry and raspberry create a ketchup & KD vibe.

Pinot Noir

Best For: Meat-loaded mac and cheese.
Why: Low tannins and berry notes pair well with cheese while standing up to savory proteins.

Zinfandel

Best For: BBQ mac and cheese.
Why: Its bold, fruity flavors and spice notes complement smoky, hearty dishes.

PAIRING BEST PRACTICES

Intensity matching: Match the intensity of the beverage with the strength of the cheese/meat for a harmonious pairing.

What grows together goes together: Pairing drinks and cheeses/meats from the same region often creates a natural flavour synergy.

Learning to balance flavours: Balance the richness of cheese with the acidity or sweetness of the drink to enhance both elements.

BEER PAIRINGS

Pale Lager or Hoppy Lager

Best For: Mild mac and cheese.

Why: Light, crisp flavors balance richness without overpowering.

Brown or Amber Ale

Best For: Meat based & Aged or bold cheeses in mac and cheese.

Why: Malt pours with smokiness. Caramel notes and higher alcohol content enhance complexity.

Fruity Beers or Hops Forward

Best For: Blue cheese or spicy mac and cheese.

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

CIDER PAIRINGS

Apple Cider

Best For: Cheddar-heavy mac and cheese.

Why: Sweet-tart balance complements savoury richness.

Pear Cider

Best For: Gooney, creamy mac and cheese.

Why: Adds a refreshing element with mild sweetness.

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

SPIRITS PAIRINGS

Bourbon

Best For: Smoky mac and 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... 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.