INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb. penne pasta
- 2 cups cherry tomatoes
- 1/2 cup salted butter
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 cups whole milk
- 2 1/2 cups half and half
- 4 cups grated medium sharp cheddar cheese divided (measured after grating)
- 2 cups grated Gruyère cheese divided (measured after grating)
- 1/4 cup center cut blue cheese (crumbled)
- 1/2 tbsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp red pepper flake

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 325 degrees and grease a 3 qt baking dish (9x13”). Set aside. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. When boiling, add dried pasta and cook 1 minute less than the package directs for al dente. Drain and drizzle with a little bit of olive oil to keep from sticking.

Combine the cheeses together in a bowl, then put 1/3 of the cheese mixture aside for the topping.

Melt butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Sprinkle in flour and whisk to combine. Mixture will look like very wet sand. Cook for approximately 1 minute, whisking often. Slowly pour in about 2 cups or so of the milk/half and half mixture, while whisking constantly, until smooth. Slowly pour in the remaining milk/half and half, while whisking constantly, until combined and smooth.

Continue to heat over medium heat, whisking very often, until thickened to a very thick consistency. It should almost be the consistency of a semi thinned out condensed soup.

Remove from the heat and stir in spices and slowly add the cheese mixture, stirring to melt and combine. Continue to stir in the rest of the cheese mixture, and stir until completely melted and smooth.

Combine the drained pasta with cheese sauce and tomatoes, stirring to combine fully. Pour entire contents of the pasta mixture into the prepared baking dish.

Top with the remaining cheese mixture and spread out evenly. Add baking dish to oven and bake for 15-20 minutes, until cheese is bubbly and lightly golden brown. Lightly sprinkle pepper flake on top and serve.