MAC N CHEESE PANCAKES

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The first time I made these was for our friend and regular customer Peter Kerwin. Every day he would have either macaroni and cheese or pancakes. One day he came in and told me to decide. At first, standing in front of my store, I wasn't sure what I was going to do. In moments like that, I tend to just follow suggestions from my unconscious. And from somewhere a little voice said, "Do both together. Why not mac and cheese pancakes?" And it worked. Today, they are one of the most popular pancakes I make. For me the process of trial and error is like swallowing mental sand from oysters in the hopes my subconscious will give me pearls. I went out recently and spent $70 on candy because I was thinking, What if I put Raisinetes in there? I still need to find out what will happen. You should try it and find out for yourself.

INGREDIENTS

Peanut oil for the griddle
Butter for the griddle and for serving
3 cups pancake batter (such as Aunt Jemima frozen batter, thawed, or scratch batter)

1 heaping cup cooked elbow macaroni, tossed with olive oil and warmed before using
1 heaping cup feather-shredded cheddar cheese
Warm Grade B maple syrup for serving

Preheat the griddle and drop the pancake batter according to the instructions.

When small bubbles appear on 40 to 50% of the surface of the pancakes, about 2 minutes, drop about 1 tablespoon of the warm elbow macaroni on each pancake.

Sprinkle with a thin layer of cheese (about 1 tablespoon) and use a thin, lightweight spatula to rapidly flip the pancakes.

After all the pancakes have been turned, reduce the heat to medium and use the spatula to press the pancakes down on the griddle.

When the undersides are golden, about 2 minutes after turning them, use the spatula in a decisive high-pressure sawing motion to lift and turn the pancakes onto a plate, B-side up.

Serve fanned out on a plate like a hand of cards so you can butter each one without lifting it. Serve with butter and warm maple syrup.

Makes 12 4-inch pancakes