Mushroom and Kale Mac & Cheese

Yield: 8-10 servings, 9 x 13 casserole dish

Ingredients:

- 1 pound elbow pasta, cooked al dente (I prefer buckwheat, quinoa, or brown rice)
- 5 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 lbs. cremini mushrooms, sliced
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 large bunch Tuscan kale, stems removed, chiffonade
- 12 cherry tomatoes, halved
- 3 cups Vegan béchamel sauce (see recipe)
- 3 Tablespoons white miso
- 2 teaspoons umeboshi paste
- 2 cups toasted breadcrumbs (I prefer gluten-free panko breadcrumbs)

For toasted breadcrumbs:

- 2 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 cups gluten-free panko breadcrumbs
- 2 Tablespoons parsley, chopped
- 1-2 garlic cloves, minced
- salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Heat 3 Tablespoons olive oil in sauté pan and sauté the mushrooms. Add garlic when mushrooms are caramelized. Add kale and cook until wilted. Toss in cherry tomatoes. Set aside.
2. Heat béchamel sauce (recipe below)and add miso and umeboshi paste. Stir until miso is dissolved. Season to taste with sea salt and fresh pepper.

3. Heat olive oil in a small sauté pan and add the panko breadcrumbs and sauté with salt, pepper, garlic and chopped parsley. Brown lightly.
4. Mix together the pasta and veggies with the béchamel sauce and transfer to a baking dish. Top the pasta with the toasted breadcrumbs and bake at 350 degrees until the breadcrumbs brown (6-8 minutes).
5. Serve garnished with chopped herbs (optional).

Vegan béchamel sauce

Yield: 3 cups

Ingredients:

- 2 teaspoons coconut oil
- 1 shallot, minced
- ¼ cup oat flour
- 5 cups almond milk
- 1-2 sprig fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- pinch nutmeg
- 2-3 tablespoons lemon juice (1/2 lemon)
- salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Use 2½ quart sauce pan, heat oil over medium flame. Sweat shallots until translucent.
2. Add flour and cook over low heat, stirring constantly for about 5 minutes.
3. Slowly whisk in almond milk; add thyme, bay leaf, and nutmeg.
4. Increase heat to simmer and continue cooking for about 10 minutes stirring often until sauce thickens.
5. Remove thyme and bay leaf. Add lemon juice. Season to taste.