

Florentine Baked Pasta

- 2 T unsalted butter
- 1 c chopped onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1/3 c unbleached all purpose flour
- 3 c cold milk
- 1 bay leaf
- 8 oz Gruyere cheese, grated
- 8 oz sharp white cheddar, grated
- 1/2 t sea salt
- 1/4 t cayenne pepper
- 1/4 t freshly grated nutmeg
- freshly ground black pepper
- 340g (3/4 lb) penne pasta
- 1 head cauliflower, cut into bite sized pieces
- 8 oz spinach, cooked, strained and chopped
- 2 T chopped flat-leafed parsley
- 1 c Panko
- 1/4 c grated Parmigiano

Preheat oven to 350F. Lightly grease a 13x9" baking dish. Melt a tablespoon of butter in a large, heavy saucepan, then sauté onion on medium heat until translucent. Add garlic, stirring for a minute. Add flour, stirring for another minute, but don't let it brown. Pour in milk and add bay leaf. Use a whisk to stir until the sauce thickens, then melt in cheese, stirring for several minutes. Add seasoning, remove bay leaf, then set aside.

Boil pasta just until al dente, then drain well. Steam cauliflower for 3 minutes or until softened. Add the cooked pasta, cauliflower, spinach and

parsley to the cheese sauce. Stir gently to combine. Transfer the pasta mixture to the greased pan, and smooth it out.

Melt a tablespoon of butter. Add it to the Panko, then add in the Parmigiano. Sprinkle the Panko topping over the pasta. Bake for 20-30 minutes until golden and bubbly. Serves 8-10.

Jittery Cook