

Béchamel Sauce

THE SAUCE AND GRAVY



CHANNEL



<https://youtu.be/PkaoGoBHABY>

Serves 4–6

Ingredients

2 cups (500 ml) milk

2 tablespoons (30 g) unsalted butter

2 tablespoons (20 g) all-purpose flour

1/2 white onion (50 g)

1 bay leaf

1 whole clove

1/4 teaspoon (0.5 g) white pepper

1/4 teaspoon (1.5 g) salt

1/4 teaspoon (0.5 g) ground nutmeg

Prep Work

Peel and prepare half of the onion. Gather the bay leaf and whole clove so they are ready for infusing the sauce later.

Measure all ingredients ahead of time because once the roux begins cooking, the sauce comes together quickly.

One of the secrets to a lump-free Béchamel sauce is using cold milk with a hot roux (or a hot milk and Cold roux). This temperature difference greatly reduces the chance of lumps forming.

Have both a whisk and spoon nearby. The whisk helps smooth the sauce, while the spoon allows you to scrape the edges and bottom of the pan where the whisk may not fully reach.

Prepare a fine mesh sieve for straining the sauce later. This helps create the classic silky-smooth texture associated with traditional French Béchamel.

To Make the Sauce

Place a saucepan over low to medium heat and melt 2 tablespoons (30 g) unsalted butter. Keep the heat controlled so the butter and flour (the roux) remain pale in color.

Whisk in 2 tablespoons (20 g) all-purpose flour and cook for 1–3 minutes, stirring constantly, until the roux is smooth and lightly bubbling. Do not allow the roux to brown.

Slowly whisk in 2 cups (500 ml) cold milk until smooth and fully combined. Use a spoon to scrape the sides and bottom of the pan as needed.

Add the onion, bay leaf, and whole clove. Reduce the heat to low and allow the sauce to gently simmer for about 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. As the sauce cooks, it will thicken and develop a smooth, glossy texture.

Skim and discard any skin or impurities that form on the surface during simmering.

Once thickened, remove the sauce from the heat. Strain the sauce through a fine mesh sieve into a clean saucepan to remove the onion, bay leaf, clove, and any remaining lumps.

Stir in the white pepper, salt, and ground nutmeg.

Taste and adjust seasoning if needed.

The finished Béchamel should be smooth, silky, and able to coat the back of a spoon.

To Serve

Serve immediately while hot and smooth.

Use Béchamel in lasagna, baked pasta dishes, gratins, casseroles, vegetables, chicken dishes, pork dishes, or veal.

This classic white sauce also serves as the base for many French derivative sauces.

Derivative Sauce Ideas

Mornay Sauce - Add freshly grated Gruyère, Swiss, cheddar, or parmesan cheese for a rich cheese sauce.

Soubise Sauce - Add slowly cooked onions for a sweet and savory onion sauce.

Cream Sauce - Finish with additional cream for a richer texture.

Country Sausage Gravy - Cooked breakfast sausage and black pepper for a Southern-style gravy.

Tips & Substitutions

Using cold milk with a hot roux (or hot milk and cold roux) helps create a smoother, lump-free sauce.

Keep the heat low to prevent the roux from browning. Béchamel should remain pale in color.

White pepper is traditionally used because it blends into the sauce without visible black specks.

If cooking over a gas flame, move the pot slightly off-center to help prevent scorching.

Do not press the sauce through the fine mesh sieve, as this can force lumps back into the sauce.

Freshly grated nutmeg provides the best flavor and aroma.

If the sauce becomes too thick, whisk in a splash of warm milk until the desired consistency is reached.

Whole milk creates the richest texture, but 2% milk may also be used.