

Basic White Sauce

THE SAUCE AND GRAVY



CHANNEL



<https://youtu.be/znXbtr-6adU>

Makes about 1 cup (250ml)

This homemade basic white sauce is a simple, versatile cream sauce made completely from scratch. Smooth, rich, and silky, it's the foundation for countless dishes like mac and cheese, lasagna, casseroles, and creamy vegetables.

With just butter, flour, and cream, you can build a restaurant-quality sauce in minutes—no store-bought mixes needed.

Ingredients

1½ tbsp (21 g) unsalted butter

1½ tbsp (12 g) all-purpose flour

1 cup (250 ml) heavy cream (cold)

Pinch of salt

Pinch of white pepper

Prep Work

Measure all ingredients ahead of time so everything comes together quickly once heat is applied.

Keep the cream cold before adding it to the hot roux—this helps create a smooth, lump-free sauce.

Have a whisk ready, since constant stirring is key to a silky finish.

To Make the Sauce

Place a small saucepan over medium heat. Add unsalted butter and allow it to melt completely, swirling the pan occasionally to ensure even heating. Do not allow the butter to brown, as the goal is to maintain a pale, clean white sauce.

Once the butter is fully melted, add all-purpose flour. Whisk immediately and continuously until the mixture forms a smooth paste. This mixture is known as a roux and serves as the thickening base for the sauce.

Cook the roux over medium heat, stirring constantly with a whisk. The texture should resemble a smooth, wet sand consistency. If the mixture appears too dry, add a small touch more butter. If it appears too loose, add a light sprinkle of flour. Continue cooking for 1–2 minutes, ensuring the raw flour taste is cooked out without allowing the roux to darken.

When ready, the roux will emit a faint warm, nutty aroma while remaining pale in color.

Slowly pour in cold heavy cream, whisking constantly as it is added. Begin with a small splash to loosen the roux, then gradually incorporate the remaining cream. This gradual addition helps prevent lumps and ensures a smooth, even texture.

Continue whisking as the sauce comes together, scraping the bottom and sides of the pan to fully incorporate all of the roux. At this stage, the mixture may appear thin; it will thicken as it heats.

Maintain the heat at medium and stir frequently as the sauce gently comes to a simmer.

Season with a pinch of salt and a pinch of white pepper. Stir to evenly distribute the seasoning throughout the sauce.

Continue cooking until the sauce lightly simmers and thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon. To test, draw a line through the coated spoon—if the line holds, the sauce has reached the correct consistency.

Remove from heat immediately to prevent over-thickening or scorching. The sauce is now ready to serve as-is or to be used as a base for other derivative sauces such as cheese sauce or herb cream sauce.

Additional Sauce Variations

Cheese Sauce - Stir in shredded cheddar, Gruyère, or Parmesan off heat until fully melted. Ideal for mac and cheese, nachos, or vegetables.

Garlic Parmesan Cream Sauce - Add sautéed garlic and grated Parmesan cheese. Finish with a touch of black pepper for pasta, chicken, or seafood.

Mustard Cream Sauce - Whisk in Dijon mustard and a small splash of lemon juice for a tangy, sharp cream sauce that pairs well with pork or chicken.

Herb Cream Sauce - Stir in fresh herbs such as parsley, thyme, or chives. Best served with roasted vegetables, fish, or chicken dishes.

Mushroom Cream Sauce - Sauté mushrooms separately until golden, then fold them into the finished white sauce. Perfect for steak, pasta, or casseroles.

Each variation starts with the same foundation—once the white sauce is mastered, the possibilities expand in every direction.

Tips & Substitutions

Use cold cream when adding it to the hot roux, as this helps prevent lumps and ensures a smooth, even texture from the start. A temperature contrast between the roux and the liquid is what gives you that classic silky finish.

Do not brown the butter or roux, as even slight browning will shift this sauce away from a classic white sauce and into a blond or nutty profile. Keep the heat at medium and adjust as needed to maintain control.

Whisk continuously while adding the cream and during the early stages of thickening. If a whisk cannot fully reach the edges of the pan, switch briefly to a spoon or spatula to prevent any roux from sticking and scorching.

If the sauce becomes too thick, loosen it with a small splash of warm cream or milk until the desired consistency is reached. If the sauce is too thin, continue simmering gently until it reduces and thickens naturally.

For extra richness, a small knob of butter can be stirred in off heat at the end to enhance gloss and mouthfeel.

White pepper is traditional for a clean finish, but black pepper may be used if preferred or if white pepper is unavailable.

This sauce is best served fresh, but if holding, keep it over very low heat and stir occasionally to prevent a skin from forming on the surface.

Thickness Guide (per 1 cup/250ml dairy)

Thin Sauce

1 tbsp (14 g) butter + 1 tbsp (8 g) flour

Medium Sauce (standard)

1½ tbsp (21 g) butter + 1½ tbsp (12 g) flour

Thick Sauce

3 tbsp (42 g) butter + 3 tbsp (24 g) flour