

## **Sauces and Such**

I, like my father, enjoy a simple meal of meat, potatoes and vegetables. This simple fare has been served countless times over the centuries and has served us well. Having said that, there are times when the basics meals become humdrum and boring – after all, even perfection served too often will lose its appeal. That is why cooks have invented ways of perking up the dull meals by adding unsuspected tastes, colors or textures. One of the best and simplest ways is, of course, is to make a sauce for the meat, the potatoes or the vegetables. One simple sauce will change the whole meal.

In recent years, the popularity of sauces had faded when folks became more calorie conscious and started eliminating sauces, dressings and other embellishments in favor of simple fare that was nutritious but low in calories. However, many soon realized that small quantities of the favorite sauces did not add a lot to the waistline but did add a great deal to the taste of the meal. Sauces are coming back but many people no longer have the knowledge or skill to make them. Here are some simple sauces that you can reintroduce to your repertoire.

## **Pan Gravies**

Roasted meat of any kind leaves some residue in the pan when it is removed for carving. These pan juices are the basis for all gravies — the easiest sauces to prepare. Needless to say, there are an infinite number of ways to make gravy.

### **Clear Gravy (Au Jus)**

Ingredients:

- Pan juices
- 1 tsp butter (salted)

Method:

Once the meat has been removed from the roasting pan, pour the juices and scrapings into a medium-sized saucepan. Bring to a boil. Cook until the amount of liquid has been reduced to about half. Strain the mixture through a sieve into a metal or ceramic bowl. Discard the solids. Add butter and blend until smooth. Add salt and pepper to taste. Return gravy to the saucepan and cover until ready to serve.

### **Pan Gravy from Roux**

For a thicker gravy, you need to start with a butter (or fat) and flour base – called a roux – and you will need to supplement the liquid with some form of broth.

A comment on broth:

These days, you can buy packaged chicken or beef broth in any grocery store but they are usually heavily salted and contain a variety of ingredients that boost the flavor, preserve the freshness of the product, or add color. These are unnecessary and it is better to use homemade broth that is easy to make and much better for you. Note that in a pinch, you can substitute water for the broth. The resulting flavor will be more bland but still acceptable.

Making broth is very simple. In a large pot add 4 to 6 cups of water and some chopped celery to the bones of a roast chicken or from a beef roast or the shells of a lobster or shrimps. Boil for about an hour. Strain through a sieve into a large jar and cool. Refrigerated, simple broths will last for a week or so. Frozen, it will last much longer.

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups chicken broth (low sodium)
- ½ cup sliced mushrooms (optional)
- 3 sprigs of Thyme (or 1 tsp dried thyme)
- 2 tsp all purpose flour
- black pepper to taste

**Method for Roast Chicken or Chicken Breast**

In the pan that the roast was cooked in, blend about ¼ cup of the broth and the flour. Whisk to blend well. Cook for 3 to 4 minutes or until the desired color is reached. The darker the roux gets the stronger the flavor. Add the remaining broth and over medium heat, bring to a boil. Add all other ingredients. Cook for about 1 minute or until the gravy thickens. Strain the gravy through a sieve into a serving boat.

**Method for Roast Pork**

Follow the recipe above but reduce the amount of thyme by a third and add 1 tsp of Dijon Mustard to the mixture and cook for about 8 minutes. Just before putting the gravy into a serving boat, stir in a tsp of butter. Whisk to blend well.

**Method for Roast Beef.**

Use the method for roast chicken (above) but substitute beef broth or vegetable broth for the chicken broth and reduce the thyme to a pinch and add a bay leaf. This gravy may take longer to thicken so stir constantly and remove it from the heat as soon as it does begin to thicken.

## **Velouté Sauce**

This sauce combines the hearty flavor of broth with the richness of cream. Excellent for chicken or steamed vegetables.

### **Ingredients:**

- 2 tbsp butter
- 3 tbsp all purpose flour
- 1 cup hot chicken broth (1 ½ minutes in a microwave)
- 1/3 cup heavy cream
- Salt and pepper to taste

### **Method;**

Melt butter in a small heavy bottomed saucepan. Stir in the flour and blend over medium heat until smooth. Cook for about 2 minutes. Add the chicken broth and continue to stir as the sauce thickens. Bring it to a boil, lower the heat and allow the mixture to simmer for about 2 more minutes. Pour in the cream. Add the salt and pepper. Serve as soon as it is thoroughly heated again.

## **Seafood Velouté Sauce**

Follow the recipe for basic Velouté sauce but substitute seafood broth (lobster or shrimp) for the chicken broth. Perfect for all kinds of fish and seafood.

## **White Sauces**

### **Béchamel (aka White Sauce)**

This is the simplest sauce to make and it is by far the most traditional. In cooking classes, it is always the first to be taught.

#### Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp butter
- 2 tbsp flour
- 1 ¼ cup milk, heated
- Salt to taste
- Freshly Ground Pepper to taste

#### Method:

Heat the milk (1 ½ minutes in a microwave should be sufficient). Melt the butter in a heavy bottomed saucepan over medium-low heat. Then add the flour, stirring constantly until the paste begins to bubble. This should take about 2 minutes but do not let the mixture brown. (This is a sauce based on a “blond roux” — that is still white rather than browned). Add the hot milk and continue stirring as the sauce thickens. Bring to a boil. Add salt and pepper to taste. Lower heat to low and continue cooking for about 2 or 3 minutes. (When ready, this sauce should be thick enough to coat the back of a spoon). Remove from heat and cover. Serve as soon as possible.

Some cooks will tell you that you can make it now to serve later but the reheating changes the flavor. As this sauce is so easy, I recommend making enough to use immediately each time rather than doing any ahead.

This sauce is ideal for steamed vegetable such as broccoli, cauliflower, or asparagus. Traditionally, it is served on peas (pods or shelled depending on the season).

## Classic Béchamel

This version has a more nuanced flavor and reflects a time when all foods took more time to prepare.

### Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp unsalted butter
- 3 tbsp onion – finely chopped
- 3 tbsp celery – finely chopped
- 3 tbsp carrot – finely chopped
- 2 tbsp prosciutto – finely chopped
- 1 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ cups whole milk
- 3 tbsp fresh parsley - coarsely chopped (or 1 tbsp dried parsley)
- 3 tbsp fresh thyme - coarsely chopped (or 1 tbsp dried thyme)
- 1 bay leaf
- ¼ tsp salt
- Dash freshly ground white pepper
- Freshly grated nutmeg (optional)

### Method:

Melt butter in a small saucepan over medium-low heat. Add onion, celery, carrot, and prosciutto to pan and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Do not allow the ingredients to brown. Sprinkle the flour over the onion mixture and cook an additional 2 minutes, stirring constantly.

Gradually add milk to the mixture, stirring with a whisk until smooth. Add the parsley, thyme, and bay leaf. Bring the sauce to a simmer and let it simmer for 10 minutes or until thickened, stirring often to prevent sticking. Remove from heat and strain the mixture through a sieve into a bowl. Discard solids. Add the salt and pepper to the mixture. Add nutmeg if desired. Serve.

## **Onion Béchamel**

A variation of the basic white sauce adds the favor of sautéed onions.

### Ingredients:

- 3 tbsp butter
- 1 cup onions (finely chopped)
- ¼ tsp ground nutmeg.
- 2 tbsp flour
- 1 ¼ cup milk, heated
- Salt to taste
- Freshly Ground Pepper to taste

### Method:

Heat the milk (1 ½ minutes in a microwave should be sufficient). Melt the butter in a heavy bottomed saucepan over medium-low heat. Add the onions and nutmeg. Sauté until tender and clear (not browned). Then add the flour, stirring constantly until the paste begins to bubble. This should take about 2 minutes but do not let the mixture brown. Add the hot milk and continue stirring as the sauce thickens. Bring to a boil. Add salt and pepper to taste. Lower heat to low and continue cooking for about 2 or 3 minutes. Remove from heat and cover. Serve as soon as possible.

## **Other Variations**

### **Curry Cream Sauce**

Make Béchamel as per the recipe above. Just before serving, stir in 1 tsp curry powder and ¼ tsp ground ginger. This adds an exotic flavor to a meal and works best with chicken or lamb.

### **Lemon Cream Sauce**

Make Béchamel as per the recipe above. Just before serving, beat in 2 egg yolks, 6 tablespoons of butter (1 at a time until melted), and 1 tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice. Works well with fish or other seafood.

### **Cheesy Béchamel**

There are many variations of cheese sauce and it depends on the cheese you prefer. You can add ½ cup of any shredded cheese such as mozzarella, gruyere, cheddar or the like. If you prefer hard

cheeses that need to be grated (parmesan, romano or asiago), use a total of 4 tbsp of cheese to start. Stir constantly as the cheese melts. Remove from heat. Cover. Serve as soon as possible. Works with almost any meal.

Note: For any white sauce, you can make it richer by adding a lightly beaten egg yolk and/or 2 tbsp butter and cooking the sauce over low heat for an additional minute.\*

---



## Sauces Using Egg Yolks

### Hollandaise Sauce

This is a silky, buttery sauce best served with lean meats, fish or poultry especially when the meat has been grilled. Also great on steamed vegetables or poached eggs.

#### Ingredients:

- ½ cup unsalted butter
- 2 large egg yolks
- 2 tbsp cold water
- 1 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 1/8 tsp salt

#### Method

Melt butter in a small saucepan over medium-low heat. Skim the solids off the top with a spoon and discard. Slowly pour melted butter into a metal bowl. Clean the saucepan of any remaining solids.

In the saucepan, combine the egg yolks and cold water. Stir with a whisk until foamy. Return pan to stove and turn up heat to medium. Stir constantly until mixture begins to thicken. Add ½ cup of the butter\* from the metal bowl a tablespoon at a time, making sure to whisk as each tablespoon is added. Add juice and salt to sauce and stir. Serve as soon as possible.

---

\* Reserve the extra butter for some other dish. It will keep in the refrigerator for several weeks.

## **Bearnaise Sauce**

This is another buttery sauce best served with lean meats, fish or poultry especially when the meat has been grilled.

### **Ingredients:**

- ½ cup unsalted butter
- 2 large egg yolks
- 2 tbsp cold water
- 3 tbsp dry white wine (optional)
- 3 tbsp white wine vinegar (increase to 4 tbsp if omitting the wine)
- 1½ tbsp shallots (or green onions). Minced
- 3 tarragon sprigs (or 1 tsp dried tarragon)
- 1/8 tsp salt

### **Method**

Melt butter in a small saucepan over medium-low heat. Skim the solids off the top with a spoon and discard. Slowly pour melted butter into a metal bowl. Clean the saucepan of any remaining solids.

In the saucepan, combine the egg yolks and cold water. Stir with a whisk until foamy. Return pan to stove and turn up heat to medium. Stir constantly until mixture begins to thicken. Add ½ cup of the butter\* from the metal bowl a tablespoon at a time, making sure to whisk as each tablespoon is added.

In a heavy saucepan, combine the wine, wine vinegar, shallots and tarragon. Simmer until the mixture is reduced to about 2 tablespoons. Strain through a sieve into the butter mixture. Stir in salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

## **Cold Sauces**

### **Mayonnaise**

Your guests will be impressed when they learn that the mayonnaise on the table was home-made rather than purchased in a store. It is relatively easy to make but it must be made quickly for best results so be prepared.

#### **Ingredients:**

- 1 tsp fresh lemon juice
- ½ tsp Dijon Mustard
- 2 large pasteurized egg yolks
- ¾ cup canola oil
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp freshly ground black pepper

#### **Method:**

Combine lemon juice, mustard and egg yolks in a medium bowl (glass or ceramic, not metal). Stir well with a whisk. Gradually add the oil starting with a drop at a time and once the oil begins to mix into the rest of the ingredients, start adding the oil a teaspoon at a time. Whisk constantly until each addition is incorporated and the mixture is thick. Stir in the salt and pepper. Serve as soon as possible. Chill in the fridge if necessary. If the oil begins to separate out, whisk vigorously to recombine the ingredients.

### **Aioli**

This sauce is the same as mayonnaise but with the addition of 1 clove of garlic (minced) to the mix