

0.1 Béchamel Sauce

- ↔ 50 g *Salted Butter* **For the Roux**
- Melt the butter in a large saucepan over a medium heat. Wait until the butter begins to melt. Be sure not to burn the butter—burned butter turns a brown colour, and smells nutty and slightly acrid.
- Modification* *Lots of different flours can be used to make a Béchamel, though generally they need to be fine and white. French T45 works very well, but almost any will do.*
- ↔ 50 g *Fine Flour* When the butter begins to bubble, add the flour and mix quickly with a spatula. Make sure that the mixture does not burn, by moving the pan off the heat if necessary to regulate the temperature.
- Continue mixing as the mixture cooks for around a minute. If left unmixed for a couple of seconds, paler bubbles should form around the periphery of the sauce. This, along with a fresh-shortcrust-pastry smell, are good indicators that the Béchamel is at the correct temperature.
- ↔ 500 mL *Milk* **For the Béchamel**
- Begin to add the milk to the Béchamel, a little at a time. At first the Béchamel will become far thicker, as the water in the milk allows the flour to stick together. Keep slowly adding more milk (not all of it, only as much as you need) until the Béchamel becomes a smooth, slightly viscous liquid, without lumps.
- Once the Béchamel begins to become runny enough, switch from mixing with a spatula to mixing with a whisk to break up any lumps of flour. If the Béchamel becomes lumpy, don't panic, and whisk vigorously to break up the lumps.
- Keep heating the Béchamel until it begins boiling again. At around this time, it should begin becoming thicker, as the starch in the flour begins to work. Whenever the Béchamel becomes thicker, pour in a little more milk, and mix. The milk will cool the Béchamel down.
- Modification* *Less milk can be used to obtain a thicker sauce, and more milk can be used to obtain a runnier sauce.*
- Continue the cycle of waiting for the Béchamel to boil and become thicker, and then adding milk to cool it down and make it runnier, until all the milk is consumed.
- ↔ *Nutmeg or other* The finished Béchamel can be seasoned with almost anything, but salt, nutmeg, and parsley are often used.
seasonings
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A Béchamel is a versatile white sauce that can be used on its own, or turned into various other sauces common in French and Italian cuisine. It is one of the five French “mother” sauces, which can be used to derive the hundreds of sauces found in French cuisine. Four of the five sauces, (Béchamel, Velouté, Espagnole, and Tomato) are made with a very similar method, and so learning to make Béchamel will teach you to make another three “mother” sauces, and all of their derivatives too.

Béchamel is a mixture of fat and water, stabilised with the gluten and starch of some flour. It can be used to marry together fatty and aqueous components of a dish, or to thicken a component of a dish.

Béchamel often has an unearned reputation for being a very hard sauce to make, but a passable Béchamel can be made with little more than throwing the ingredients in a saucepan and vigorously whisking. There is a lot of skill in making a wonderful Béchamel, but more often than not, any Béchamel will do.