

## Sauces: A little History

The word “sauce” is a French word that means a relish to make our food more appetizing. Sauces are liquid or semi-liquid foods devised to make other foods look, smell, and taste better, and hence be more easily digested and more beneficial. Because of the lack of refrigeration in the early days of cooking, meat, poultry, fish and seafood didn’t last long. Sauces and gravies were used to mask the flavor of tainted foods. Today we use the sauces to enhance the dish....not cover it up!

Modern sauces may be divided into two classes: the “Careme” and “Escoffier” classes. Among the faithful, in the great kitchens of the world, Escoffier is to Careme what the New Testament is to the Old. There are five basic sauces that every cook should master. These are called the “Mother Sauces or Grand Sauces.” Antonin Careme, founding father of French “grande cuisine,” came up with the methodology in the early 1800’s by which hundreds of sauces would be categorized under five Mother Sauces, and there are infinite possibilities for variations, since the sauces are all based on a few basic formulas. Escoffier then came along and streamlined the restaurant kitchen as we know it today.

Sauces are one of the fundamentals of cooking. Know the basics and you’ll be able to prepare a multitude of recipes like a professional. Learn how to make the basic five sauces and their most common derivatives and WOW you dinner guests.

The five Mother Sauces are:

|                            |                   |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Béchamel Sauce (white)     | V&PL              |
| Veloute Sauce (blond)      | PL, F&S, L, V     |
| Brown (demi-glaze)         | B, L, P, PL       |
| Hollandaise Sauce (butter) | V, F&S, PL (eggs) |
| Tomato Sauce (red)         | B, L, P, PL, PA   |

V = vegetables; PL = poultry; B = Beef; P = Pork; L = Lamb; F&S = fish and shellfish; PA = Pasta

**BECHAMEL SAUCE** (bay-shah-mel) – As the housewife in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century did not have the luxury of modern refrigeration, they were wary of using milk in their recipes. Peddlers were known to sell watered down or rancid produce. Basically, only the rich or royalty could use milk in their sauces. In France, it is one of the four basic sauces called “meres” or “mother sauces” from which all other sauces derive. It is also known as “white sauce.” It is a smooth, white sauce made from a roux made with flour, boiled milk, and butter. It is usually served with white meats, eggs, and vegetables. It forms the basis of many other sauces.

**VELOUTE SAUCE** (veh-loo-TAY) – Also called sauce Blanche Grasse or fat white sauce, rich white sauce. One of the five “mother sauces” it is a stock-based white sauce that can be made from chicken, veal, or fish stock thickened with white roux.

**BROWN SAUCE OR ESPAGNOLE SAUCE** (ehs-pah-NYOHL) – A rich, reduced brown sauce containing herbs, tomato puree or fresh tomatoes and a mirepoix of browned vegetables, all thickened by brown roux.

**HOLLANDAISE SAUCE** (HOL –unn-dayz) – Hollandaise means Holland style or from Holland. Uses butter and egg yolks as binding. It is served hot with vegetables, fish, and eggs (like eggs benedict). It will be a pale lemon color, opaque, but with a luster not appearing oily. The basic sauces and its variations should have a butter-smooth texture, almost frothy, and an aroma of good butter. Making this emulsified sauce requires a good deal of practice – it is not for the faint of heart. Béarnaise sauce, which is “related” to hollandaise sauce, is most often served with rich meats such as steak or lamb.

**TOMATO SAUCE** is any of the very large number of sauces made primarily out of tomatoes, usually to be served as part of the dish rather than as a condiment. Tomato sauces are common for meats and vegetables; however they are mostly know as sauces that enhance or flavor pasta dishes. Some are quite simple and some require days of slow cooking.

**BECHAMEL SAUCE:** A versatile base for many other sauces, béchamel is used to add moisture, to bind, and to enrich. It is made with a roux, which is a smooth, cooked mixture of flour and butter that binds and thickens; it is also used in veloutes and some brown sauces. It is important to cook béchamel for 15 minutes so that the flour loses its raw taste and to stir continuously to give a smooth and glossy consistency. Traditionally béchamel sauce is flavored with white pepper, but if, like me, you find black pepper flecks an interesting feature; use it instead because it is much more aromatic. When using béchamel as a binding agent or as a base for baked dishes, simply use milk, but for more delicate pouring sauces infuse the milk to bring out even more flavor in the sauce.

#### MASTER RECIPE:

Béchamel is made with a white roux, which is cooked for about 4 minutes. To make a golden roux for use in Veloutes, cook the roux in step one for 5-6 minutes, stirring or beating continuously, until it is a golden brown. To make a brown roux, which is sometimes used to thicken brown sauces, use clarified butter and cook over medium heat, stirring or beating continuously, for about 8-10 minutes, until it is a rich brown color.

Makes 1¼ cups:

For the roux:

2 tbsp butter

¼ cup flour

For the sauce:

2 cups milk or infused milk \*

Freshly grated nutmeg to taste

Salt and freshly ground white or black pepper

Shelf life – one week in the refrigerator

Melt the butter in a small pan and when it starts to foam, stir in the flour with a wooden spoon until well combined. Cook the roux over a medium heat for 3-4 minutes, stirring continuously; do not allow it to brown.

Add the milk, whisking continuously to prevent lumps from forming. Bring to a boil, and then reduce the heat and simmer, still stirring until the sauce is smooth, about 15 – 20 minutes.

Whisk in the nutmeg, if using, and season with salt and pepper to taste.

- Infusing Milk – Heat 2 cups milk in a pan with 1 peeled and quartered onion, 3-4 cloves, and a bouquet garni made with 1 bay leaf, 1-2 springs of thyme, and a strip of lemon peel, if desired. Bring to a boil; then reduce the heat to minimum and simmer gently for about 10 minutes. After 10 minutes, remove from the heat and allow the sauce to cool and then pour through a strainer, discarding the residue that is left behind.

**VELOUTE SAUCE:** Rich and velvety, Veloute sauce is made from the same roux base as Béchamel, but using stock instead of milk makes it thinner and lighter and gives it a smooth texture. The flavor depends on the quality of your stock; homemade is best, but canned stock will do; use bouillon cubes only in emergencies. Use a stock that complements the food you are serving; chicken stock with chicken, for example. The ideal consistency of a veloute is that of a smooth pouring sauce that thinly coats the back of a spoon. Shelf life: 2-3 days in the refrigerator; 1 month in the freezer.

For the roux:

2 tbsp butter  
¼ cup flour

For the sauce:

3¼ cups stock  
Strained lemon juice, to taste  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Melt the butter in a small pan and when it starts to foam, stir in the flour with a wooden spoon until well combined. Cook the roux over a medium heat for 5-6 minutes, stirring continuously; do not allow it to brown. Add the stock and bring to a boil, beating continuously with a wire whisk.

Reduce the heat to minimum and simmer the veloute for 30 minutes, skimming any residue off the surface and stirring every now and then.

Strain the veloute through a sieve, add lemon juice, if desired and season to taste.

One variation:

Caper Sauce – this traditional British sauce is delicious served with braised lamb but is also surprisingly good with chicken and fish.

1 recipe Veloute made with Chicken stock  
3 tbsp capers in brine, drained and chopped  
1-2 anchovy fillets, chopped (optional)  
1 tbsp lemon juice  
A few gratings of lemon peel  
2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley, mint, or dill  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Bring the veloute to a boil in a pan and add the capers and anchovies, if using. Reduce the heat and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring frequently to prevent scorching.

Season, and then add the lemon juice and peel. Stir in the herbs just before serving.

**BROWN SAUCE – DEMI-GLAZE:** Reduction sauces are simply sauces based on stock that has been reduced by boiling to give an intense flavor. The classic reduction sauce is Demi-glaze, which is worth mastering because it can form the base of many other wonderful sauces. One of the essential *haute-cuisine* sauces, it can take as long as two days to prepare because you need to make a rich stock first. Although the process can be time consuming, the results are always justified, since a faithfully reduced sauce will be well-rounded, robust, and extremely flavorful.

**DEMI-GLAZE:** This lighter and healthier version of the conventional demi-glaze uses no flour or Maderia, yet the finished sauce is clear, robust, and rich and can be served with red meat or used as a base for other sauces. Adding butter at the end gives the demi-glaze a wonderful rich gloss, but omit this and the seasoning if using the demi-glaze as a base for other sauces. To save a little time, roughly chop the vegetables in a food processor rather than by hand. This recipe makes 1 – 1¼ cups sauce.

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp butter
- ¾ cup shallots, finely chopped
- 1 cup carrots, finely chopped
- ½ cup celery, finely chopped
- 1 cup leek, white part only, finely chopped
- ¾ cup very ripe tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and chopped
- A bouquet garni made with 2 green leek leaves, 3 sprigs of thyme, 1 spring of rosemary, a few springs of parsley, and 1 bay leaf
- 6 cups Brown stock
- 2 tbsp butter, chilled and cubed
- Salt, if necessary and freshly ground black pepper

Shelf life: one week in the refrigerator.

Heat the olive oil and butter in a large pan; add the shallots, carrots, celery, and leek and fry gently until lightly browned and caramelized.

Add the tomatoes, bouquet garni, and stock and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, skimming off any residue from the surface, until the sauce is reduced by a third, about 45-50 minutes.

Strain the reduction through a sieve lined with cheesecloth. Transfer to a clean pan. Simmer the strained reduction for 45 minutes- 1 hour or until reduced by about three-quarters.

The finished demi-glaze should be thick and syrupy in consistency and evenly coat the back of a spoon. If the demi-glaze is to be served as a sauce, beat in the butter a little at a time then season to taste.

**HOLLANDAISE SAUCE:** This light, rich, and versatile sauce is a glorious invention of the French kitchen although it may, in fact, have been created by French exiles to Holland, hence the name. It is the classic butter emulsion and resembles a warm mayonnaise but is made with clarified butter instead of oil. Deliciously light, Hollandaise is great served with boiled or steamed vegetable, or poached fish. It is also the basis for Béarnaise Sauce which classically accompanies steak. After mastering the technique, experiment with adding different herbs, purees, and spices to create new and exciting versions of this magnificent sauce. Hollandaise should be served warm, never hot. Keep it warm in a Bain Marie or in a bowl set over a pan of hot water (but keep the water just warmer than lukewarm and do not allow the bottom of the bowl to come into contact with it.)

Master Recipe:

Makes 3 cups

- 4 Tbsp water
- 1 Tbsp white wine vinegar
- 1 tsp white or black peppercorns, crushed
- 4 egg yolks
- 1 cup unsalted butter, clarified cooled to room temperature
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- Salt

Put the water, vinegar, and peppercorns into a small pan and simmer over low heat until reduced by a third, about 2-3 minutes. Pour the reduction through a strainer into a glass or stainless steel bowl; then allow this to cool.

Place the bowl of vinegar/water over a pan of just-simmering water; add the egg yolks and stir until the mixture has thickened and is smooth, about 5-8 minutes. Keep the heat low and do not allow the sauce to get hotter than lukewarm or the eggs might coagulate. Slowly pour in the cooled, clarified butter, stirring continuously until the sauce is thick and fluffy. Mix in the lemon juice and salt. Smooth, thick and creamy, the Hollandaise should now hold the trail of the stirring tool. Serve immediately.

Quick – Blender Version:

- ½ cup butter, melted
- 3 egg yolks
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- ¼ tsp salt

Pour the melted butter very slowly into the blender where the remaining ingredients are, blending at low speed. Blend for 15 seconds. Serve immediately.

**TOMATO SAUCE:** There are any of a very large number of sauces made primarily out of tomatoes, usually to be served as part of a dish (rather than as a condiment). Tomato sauces are common for meats and vegetables, but they are perhaps best known as sauces for pasta dishes.

### Three Tomato Sauce

2 tbsp olive oil  
2 garlic cloves thinly sliced  
1 small onion, finely diced  
¼ cup tomato paste  
¾ cup water  
½ cup red wine  
2 ounces sun-dried tomatoes, soaked in hot water for 20 minutes, then drained and sliced into fine julienne. Note: These are not oil soaked tomatoes.  
1/3 pound grape tomatoes, roasted and lightly charred and soft  
Small bunch of fresh basil, torn  
Salt and pepper to taste

Heat the oil in a large skillet; add the garlic and onions and sauté until they are golden. Add the tomato paste, water, wine and sun-dried tomatoes and bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer until reduced by a third, about 20 minutes.

Fold the roasted grape tomatoes into the sauce with the basil and taste to adjust the seasoning.

Compliments of: Chef Cal Kraft - CPC