

Bonjour, Food Fans!

Not too long ago, I started taking a crack at some classic French recipes, which have been delicious!

One thing I have noticed, however, is that some dishes seem a little complicated, and I'm nothing if not lazy. With that in mind, I bring you

Deconstructed Croque Madams

This recipe makes enough for 4 people and comes in two parts: How to make the bechamel and the "sandwich" itself, although I wouldn't classify this or a traditional Croque Madam as a sandwich because you can't really pick it up.

For the bechamel you'll need:

- 1 tbsp of butter
- 2 tbsp flour
- 1 ½ cups milk
- 1 sprig of rosemary
- 1 ½ tsp dijon mustard
- ¼ tsp nutmeg
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp pepper

Heat a small saucepan over medium heat, melting the butter as the pan warms.

Once the butter is melted, add the flour and whisk the two together.

Continue to whisk constantly for 2 minutes. Don't allow the flour to brown.

Next, add in the milk and rosemary sprig.

Stir occasionally while cooking until the milk thickens. This should take about 10 minutes.

Once the milk is thickened, remove the rosemary and add in the mustard, nutmeg, salt, and pepper.

Bechamel is a great sauce and is considered a French mother sauce, meaning it has a million uses and is the basis for lots of other sauces and dishes.

To build the Croque Madam itself, you'll need:

- 2 tbsp butter, at room temperature
- 4 slices of bread, the nicer the better
 - but avoid a type of bread with strong flavors,
 - like rye
- 8 ounces of thinly sliced ham
- or
- 4 strips of bacon
- 8 ounces gruyere, shredded
- 2 cloves garlic, minced

4 large eggs
salt and pepper

If you're going with the bacon instead of ham, cook that in advance and set aside. Save the grease, it's great for frying the egg in.

Butter both sides of each slice of bread. Then, cook each side in a pan over medium-high heat until golden brown.

On top of the bread, spread on the garlic and coat in the bechamel.

Next, add the ham or bacon, and cover with shredded gruyere cheese.

Put the sandwiches under the broiler so the cheese melts and starts to brown ever so slightly, which will take 2-3 minutes.

You can use the pan that you browned the bread in if it's broiler safe when melting the cheese, but if it's not broiler safe, transfer the croque madams to a dish that is.

While the rest is under the broiler, fry the eggs so that the yolk is still runny.

Pull the pan out from the broiler and top each croque madam with an egg, more bechamel, salt, and pepper.

Serve immediately and ideally with a fresh salad.

Happy eating!