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### **The Croque Monsieur & Madame**

*Makes 4 sandwiches*

Comfort food takes on different definitions in various cultures. Originating in the French cafes of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, this ham and cheese sandwich is at once both simple everyday food while also elegant and special with all the included flavors. The term “Croque Monsieur” roughly translates as “gentleman crunch.” It’s counterpart, the “Croque Madame” is the same sandwich topped with a fried egg – said to be reminiscent of a lady’s hat. Learn why this sandwich earns top status as French comfort food.

#### ***Ingredients:***

2 tablespoons butter  
8 slices brioche bread  
1-2 tablespoons Dijon mustard  
Béchamel sauce (below)  
8 slices ham, thinly sliced  
3 cups grated cheese  
(we like using a mixture of gruyère, parmesan, and sharp white cheddar)  
4 eggs (optional)

#### ***Béchamel Sauce Ingredients:***

3 tablespoons butter  
3 tablespoons flour  
2 cups milk  
1 bay leaf  
1/2 cup parmesan, grated  
1/8 tsp nutmeg  
1 teaspoon kosher salt  
1/4 teaspoon pepper

#### ***Directions:***

1. Make the béchamel sauce. In a small saucepan, over medium high heat, melt the butter until bubbly. Add the flour and whisk vigorously together. While continuously stirring, allow the roux to cook and the flavors to develop for 2 minutes. Slowly, add the milk and continue to whisk. Add the bay leaf, and nutmeg. Whisk the sauce until smooth and thickened, then slowly add the Parmesan cheese. Stir until the cheese is melted and the sauce is smooth. Season the sauce with salt and pepper, to taste.
2. Prep the sandwich. Slice the bread, and lightly butter the outside of each slice. Spread a thin layer of Dijon mustard and a layer of the Béchamel sauce. Place 2 slices of ham on top of the Béchamel sauce and sprinkle with half the grated cheese. Top each stack with a second slice of bread.
3. Grill the sandwich. Using a panini press, or in a skillet grill the sandwich until golden brown on both sides.
4. Broil the cheese. Add another layer of Béchamel sauce to the top of each grilled sandwich. Sprinkle with the remaining grated cheese and broil in the oven until bubbly and browned.