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Béchamel Sauce

Makes about 2-1/2 to 3 cups

Béchamel is a basic white sauce, one of the most commonly used mother sauces in the kitchen -- one that you are probably very familiar with. It is the base for many delicious daughter sauces and recipes including as a cheesy white sauce in mac-and-cheese, a rich layer in lasagna, and is often used in gratins.

Ingredients:

4 tablespoons butter
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
3 cups whole milk, warmed
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper

Directions:

1. Prepare the roux. In a saucier or saucepan, heat 4 tablespoons of butter. Once the butter has melted, whisk in the flour until the mixture is completely smooth. Continue cooking and stirring for about 2 minutes, but don't let it brown. This process removes the raw flour flavor and helps create a silky sauce.
2. Create the béchamel sauce by very slowly pouring the milk into the roux. Continue whisking the mixture until the sauce is smooth. Bring the mixture to a boil, then lower the heat and continue stirring while the sauce simmers and begins to thicken. Add Kosher salt and pepper, to taste. Continue whisking over medium-low heat for another 3-5 minutes until the sauce thickens and becomes very creamy. The consistency of the sauce should be thick enough to coat the back of a spoon.
3. From here, you can get creative with other flavor additions like nutmeg, cayenne, or crushed red pepper. Further transform the sauce by adding grated cheese like Gruyère to make a Mornay sauce.
4. To avoid a skin from forming on the top of the sauce, coat the top layer of the finished sauce with a pat of butter. Simply slide the butter around on the surface, this will help keep the sauce from creating a skin. When ready to enjoy, whisk the surface butter into the sauce.