



## *The 5 "Mother"*

### *Sauces*

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Good Morning!  
August 2, 2010

A sauce is the crowning glory of any dish. From the basic "five mother" sauces, there are literally hundreds of variations of sauce that are used to dress, compliment, enhance and bring out the flavor of the food it is served with.

According to the ultimate cooking reference book, *The New Food Lover's Companion*, by Sharon Tyler Herbst, the French are credited with refining the sophisticated art of sauce-making. The development of various sauces over the years stems from the 19th-century French chef Antonin Carême who evolved an intricate methodology by which hundreds of sauces were classified under one of five "mother sauces." Those basic sauces are the white sauce **Béchamel**, the light stock-based **Velouté**, the brown stock-based **Espagnole**; the two basic emulsified sauces, **Hollandaise** and **Mayonnaise**; and the oil and vinegar-based **Vinaigrette**.

(**Tomato** is considered to be among the 5 mother sauces, however, it actually came about later...although it certainly has earned the title since it is the base for a large variety of sauces in today's cookery.)

The method for preparing the various types of sauces incorporates some of the same techniques. For example, a **roux** is basic to many of the white and brown sauces. This cooked mixture of flour and fat (usually butter) is an important contribution to the sauce-making art. In addition, these classic sauces have been joined by a plethora of modern-day sauces such as sweet dessert sauces, tomato, pesto and barbecue sauces, as well as a wide variety of gravies.

Always remember that when a sauce is used on a food, it is the first thing to touch the tongue. A sauce is only as good as the ingredients you put into it and the care you take while preparing it. On the other hand, a good sauce does little to make inferior food taste better. Always put a good sauce on good food. Thankfully, we no longer use sauce to mask "off-tasting food" as was once the practice in times before modern refrigeration!

#### **DEFINING THE FIVE MOTHER SAUCES**

**Béchamel**, the classic white sauce, was named after its inventor, Louis XIV's steward Louis de Béchamel. The king of all sauces, it is often referred to as a cream sauce because of its appearance and is probably used most frequently in all types of dishes. Made by stirring milk into a butter-flour roux, the thickness of the sauce depends on the proportion of flour and butter to milk. The proportions for a thin sauce would be 1 tablespoon each of butter and flour per 1 cup of milk; a medium sauce would use 2 tablespoons each of butter and flour; a thick sauce, 3 tablespoons each.

**Velouté** is a stock-based white sauce. It can be made from chicken, veal or fish stock. Enrichments such as egg yolks or cream are sometimes also added.

**Espagnole**, or brown sauce, is traditionally made of a rich meat stock, a mirepoix of browned vegetables (most often a mixture of diced onion, carrots and celery), a nicely browned roux, herbs and sometimes tomato paste.

**Hollandaise and Mayonnaise** are two sauces that are made with an emulsion of egg yolks and fat. **Hollandaise** is made with butter, egg yolks and lemon juice, usually in a double boiler to prevent overheating, and served warm. It is generally used to embellish vegetables, fish and egg dishes, such as the classic Eggs Benedict. **Mayonnaise** is a thick, creamy dressing that's an emulsion of vegetable oil, egg yolks, lemon juice or vinegar and seasonings. It is widely used as a spread, a dressing and as a sauce. It's also used as the base for such mixtures as Tartar Sauce, Thousand Island Dressing, Aioli, and Remoulade.

**Vinagrette** is a sauce made of a simple blend of oil, vinegar, salt and pepper (usually 3 parts oil to 1 part vinegar). More elaborate variations can include any combination of spices, herbs, shallots, onions, mustard, etc. It is generally used to dress salad greens and other cold vegetable, meat or fish dishes.

### **TIPS FOR SAUCE SUCCESS**

Constantly stir roux-thickened sauces while cooking to prevent lumps. If you must leave the sauce for a few seconds, set the pan off the heat during that time.

If a roux-thickened sauce develops a few lumps, beat them out with a rotary beater or wire whisk. As a last resort, strain sauce with sieve to remove lumps.

Cook egg-thickened sauces over low heat, or cook these sauces in the top of a double boiler over hot, not boiling, water. Always temper (warm) the egg yolks before adding them to the sauce by first stirring in a little of the hot sauce mixture into them. Then add to the remainder of the sauce mixture. Never let a sauce boil after the egg yolks are added as the sauce may curdle.

Don't let water boil in the bottom of the double boiler if you use it to make egg-thickened sauces. Also, be sure that the water doesn't touch the bottom of the pan holding the sauce.

Basic Bechamel (White Sauce) with Variations  
Basic Velouté Sauce with Variations  
Basic Espagnole (Brown Sauce) with Variations  
Basic Mayonnaise with Variations and Basic Hollandaise  
with Variations  
Basic Vinaigrette with Variations

I'm including here 2 recipes for Basic Tomato Sauce,  
although not included with the "five mother" sauces, are  
a great part of basic sauces to keep around.

Basic Tomato Sauce  
Basic Tomato Sauce 2

## Basic Bechamel (White) Sauce with Variations

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One of the "five mother" sauces, this most basic sauce in cookery is based on a roux, which is equal volumes of butter and flour. To make the sauce, a liquid (milk, cream, or stock) is added and, in just a few minutes, the liquid thickens up nicely.

### INGREDIENTS

#### THIN SAUCE

1 tablespoon butter or margarine  
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour  
1 cup milk, cream, or stock  
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

#### MEDIUM SAUCE

2 tablespoons butter or margarine  
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour  
1 cup milk, cream, or stock  
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

#### THICK SAUCE

3 tablespoons butter or margarine  
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour  
1 cup milk, cream, or stock  
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

Melt butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Stir in flour and cook over medium, stirring constantly, until mixture is smooth and bubbly, about 1 to 2 minutes.

Stir in milk or other liquid. Heat to boiling, stirring constantly. Boil and stir 1 minute. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Makes 1 cup sauce

### VARIATIONS

CHEESE SAUCE - Stir in 1/4 teaspoon dry mustard with the flour. Once sauce is made, remove from heat and stir in 1/2 to 1 cup sharp Cheddar cheese, stirring until melted.

CURRY SAUCE - Stir in 1/2 teaspoon curry powder with the flour.

DILL SAUCE - Stir in 1 teaspoon chopped fresh, or 1/2 teaspoon dried dill weed and a dash of ground nutmeg with the flour.

NOTE - It is best to use warm to hot liquids when making sauce, which helps to prevent lumps. Also, constant stirring will help prevent the sauce from scorching on the bottom. If sauce turns lumpy, whisk vigorously with a wire whip or strain through a wire sieve before serving.

See Meat-Based Bechamel Sauce

## Basic Espagnole (Brown Sauce) with Variations

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### INGREDIENTS

#### SACHET

1/2 bay leaf  
2 parsley stems, no leaves  
1/8 teaspoon dried thyme leaves  
1 clove garlic  
1 piece of cheesecloth, cut into a 6-inch square  
1 piece of butcher's twine, cut 12-inches long

1 small onion, peeled  
1 carrot, peeled  
1 stalk celery  
1 clove garlic  
1/2 cup butter  
1/2 cup all-purpose flour  
2 tablespoons additional butter  
6 cups beef stock or bouillon, room temperature  
2 ounces tomato purée  
1/8 teaspoon salt  
1-1/8 teaspoon ground white pepper

TO MAKE SACHET - Place the bay leaf, parsley stems, thyme, and garlic in the square of cheesecloth. Gather up the corners and twist together. Using just 1 end of the string, tie the sachet closed. The other end of the string, the long end, will be suspended from the handle of the saucepan. Set aside until ready to use.

Cut the onion, carrot, and celery into medium, 1/2-inch, dice. Set aside. Mince garlic.

Heat the 1/2 cup butter in a small saucepan until hot. Whisk in the flour to a paste consistency, and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, for 5 to 6 minutes until mixture (roux) bubbles, turns light brown in color and has a nutty aroma. This is called a **dark roux**. Set aside.

Place the remaining 2 tablespoons butter in a heavy, 4-quart stockpot over medium heat. Add the onion, carrot, and celery. Sauté the vegetables, stirring often, for about 5 to 6 minutes, or until well browned. Add the minced garlic and sauté another 1 to 2 minutes.

Add the cooked roux to the vegetables, stirring to combine. Gradually, pour in the brown stock and then the tomato purée. Tie the pre-made sachet to one handle of the stockpot, letting it dangle in the liquid.

Bring to a boil, skimming off any impurities from the surface, as needed. Reduce heat

and simmer, uncovered, for about 2 hours, skimming the surface occasionally, until the sauce is reduced to about 1 quart.

Untie sachet. Then pour sauce and the sachet into a fine strainer or china cap lined with cheesecloth. Use a ladle or spoon to gently press any remaining vegetables through the strainer. Discard the sachet.

Season to taste with salt and pepper, if desired.

Set over a double boiler filled with warm water until ready to serve. Or cool completely, then cover and store in the refrigerator in an airtight container for up to 1 week. The sauce may also be frozen for up to 3 months.

Makes about 1 quart

BORDELAISE SAUCE - Place 1 cup red wine, 2 minced shallots, 1/4 teaspoon crushed black peppercorns, a pinch of thyme, and 1/2 bay leaf in a saucepan. Bring to a boil and then reduce to medium heat. Cook for about 33 minutes or until reduced by three-fourths. Add 1 quart Demi-glace and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes.

Remove from heat and strain through a lined strainer or cheesecloth. Cut 2 tablespoons butter into small pieces and drop them, 1 at a time, into the sauce while stirring constantly to combine. Serve immediately.

Makes about 4 cups

MADEIRA SAUCE - Place 1 quart Demi-glace in a heavy saucepan over medium heat. Cook for 30 to 45 minutes until reduced to 1/2 cup. Add 1/4 cup Madeira wine, stirring to combine. Serve immediately.

Makes about 4 cups

MUSHROOM SAUCE - Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a heavy sauté pan over moderate heat. Add 1 minced shallot and sauté for 2 to 3 minutes until translucent. Add 1/2 pound sliced mushrooms and continue sautéing until brown. Add 1 quart Demi-glace and simmer for about 10 minutes. Add 1 tablespoon dry sherry and 1 teaspoon lemon juice. Serve immediately.

Makes about 4 cups

## Basic Velouté Sauce with Variations

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One of the "five mother" sauces, Velouté is a stock-based white sauce. It is made from chicken, fish, or veal stock.

### INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons butter  
3 tablespoons flour  
2 cups chicken, fish, or veal stock  
Salt  
White pepper

Melt butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Stir in flour and cook over medium, stirring constantly, until mixture is smooth and bubbly, about 1 to 2 minutes.

Slowly stir in stock. Heat to boiling, stirring constantly. Reduce the heat to low and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Makes about 2 cups

### VARIATIONS

BERCY - Cook 1 cup dry white wine and 2 minced shallots in a 2-quart saucepan over medium heat for 5 to 7 minutes or until reduced in volume by 3/4. Add 1 quart fish velouté, reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Stir in 1 tablespoon unsalted butter and 3 tablespoons finely chopped parsley. Serve immediately.

Makes about 4 cups

SUPREME SAUCE - Pour 1 quart chicken or veal velouté in a 2-quart saucepan and simmer over low heat until reduced in volume by 1/4. Place 1 cup heavy cream in a bowl and temper by slowly incorporating about a 1/2 cup of the velouté into the cream. Slowly stir the cream mixture into the sauce, and return to a very low simmer. Add 8 tablespoons butter, 1 at a time, into the sauce while stirring constantly. Add 1 teaspoon, or to taste, lemon juice. Adjust seasonings, as needed. Strain the sauce through cheesecloth or a fine strainer and serve immediately.

Makes about 2 cups



## Basic Mayonnaise with Variations

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One of the "five mother" sauces. Traditionally, mayonnaise is made by whisking the ingredients vigorously by hand while slowly incorporating the oil to create an emulsion. The use of a blender makes things much easier. Begin with all the ingredients at room temperature for success in making homemade mayonnaise in your blender.

### INGREDIENTS

1 large egg or 2 egg yolks\*  
1 tablespoon white wine vinegar or white vinegar or white rice vinegar\*\*  
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice  
1/2 teaspoon dry mustard  
1/8 teaspoon sugar  
1/8 teaspoon ground white pepper, or to taste  
Salt, to taste  
1 cup vegetable oil, preferably canola

Blend all the ingredients, except the oil, in a blender until smooth. With the machine running, add the oil **very slowly** in a slow steady stream, until the mixture is well combined and thickened.

Taste and adjust the seasoning, as desired. Store in the refrigerator in a container with a tight-fitting lid for 3 to 4 days.

Makes 1 cup

NOTE - Homemade mayonnaise will not be as thick as commercially made mayonnaise.

**\*\*WHITE RICE VINEGAR** - White rice vinegar, made from fermented rice, has a low acidity and is milder and sweeter than ordinary white vinegar. It can be found in Asian markets and most supermarkets.

### VARIATIONS

GARLIC MAYONNAISE (Aioli) - Add 2 teaspoons minced garlic, roasted for an additional flavor boost, with the first group of ingredients.

HERB MAYONNAISE - Stir 1 to 2 tablespoons minced fresh herbs, such as flat-leaf parsley, watercress, basil, oregano, or tarragon, into the completed mayonnaise.

## Basic Vinaigrette with Variations

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One of the "five mother" sauces, Vinaigrette is made of a simple blend of oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper. More elaborate variations can include any combination of spices, herbs, shallots, onions, mustard, etc. It is generally used to dress salad greens and other cold vegetable, meat, or fish dishes.

### INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup red or white wine vinegar  
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste  
3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

In a bowl whisk together the vinegar, salt, and pepper. Add olive oil in a small, slow stream to vinegar mixture and whisk until the mixture emulsifies. Taste and adjust seasoning as needed.

Makes 1 cup

### VARIATIONS

MUSTARD VINAIGRETTE - Add 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard to the vinegar and stir before adding the oil.

HONEY MUSTARD VINAIGRETTE - Add 2 teaspoons honey and 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard to the vinegar and stir before adding the oil.

HERBED-SPICED VINAIGRETTE - Add any combination of 1 to 2 tablespoons minced fresh herbs, such as finely chopped shallots, onion, garlic, flat-leaf parsley, watercress, basil, oregano, or tarragon to the vinegar and stir before adding the oil.

TOMATO-BASIL VINAIGRETTE - In a blender, combine 3 oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, 1/4 cup fresh basil leaves, 1 garlic clove, 1 tablespoon freshly grated Parmesan cheese along with the vinegar, salt, and pepper and process until smooth. While blender is running, add the oil in a slow stream until mixture is emulsified. Adjust seasoning to taste.

## Basic Tomato Sauce

[Print This Recipe](#)

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This recipe is so useful, I keep it on hand at all times. It couldn't be easier to make, and you don't even need fresh tomatoes. Use good canned Italian tomatoes, like Progresso. This sauce freezes well, so feel free to double the recipe, so you can put some away.

This works well as a basis for Creole dishes, as it's seasoned with thyme rather than basil. If you're making Italian dishes, substitute basil for its distinctive sweetness and perfume.

### INGREDIENTS

1 Spanish onion, cut into 1/4-inch dice  
4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced  
3-ounces extra-virgin olive oil  
4 tablespoons fresh thyme, or 2 teaspoons dried, crushed  
1/2 medium carrot, finely shredded  
2 (28-ounce) cans of tomatoes, crushed and mixed well with their juices  
Salt, to taste

Sauté the onion and garlic in the olive oil over medium heat until translucent, but not brown - about 10 minutes. Add the thyme and carrot and cook 5 minutes more. Add the tomatoes.

Bring to a boil, lower the heat to just bubbling, stirring occasionally for 30 minutes. Season with salt, to taste.

Serve immediately, or set aside for further use. The sauce may be refrigerated for up to 1 week or frozen for up to 6 months.

Makes 6 cups

See [Basic Tomato Sauce 2](#)

See [Basic Tomato Sauce 3](#)

## Basic Tomato Sauce 2

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Canned Italian plum tomatoes from San Marzano make an excellent sauce, but they can be difficult to find. When you see them, buy a few cans and make a large batch of sauce for the freezer. Simmer the tomatoes whole and adjust the texture of the sauce during the final blending. Both this and the following fresh tomato sauce can be served with virtually any pasta shape. Allow about half a cup sauce for two ounces uncooked dried pasta or half an "egg" fresh pasta.

### INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil  
1 medium onion, diced fine  
1 medium carrot, diced fine  
1 teaspoon dried basil  
1/2 bay leaf  
1 can (35-ounces) Italian plum tomatoes, preferably from San Marzano, with liquid  
Kosher salt  
Freshly ground black pepper

Heat the oil in a heavy 3 quart saucepan over medium heat. Stir in the onion, carrot, basil and bay leaf. Reduce the heat to medium-low. Sauté the vegetables, stirring frequently, until softened, about 10 minutes.

Stir in the tomatoes and liquid. Reduce the heat to simmering. Cover the pan and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes.

Stir in the salt and pepper to taste. Simmer 5 minutes. Working in batches, process the sauce in a food processor or blender to the desired consistency-about 10 seconds at low speed for a smooth sauce, about 5 seconds at low speed for a medium-coarse sauce, or 3 or 4 quick on/off pulses for a chunky sauce.

To serve, warm the appropriate amount of sauce in a large skillet over low heat while the pasta is cooking. Adjust the seasoning. Just before draining the pasta, ladle 2 tablespoons pasta cooking liquid per serving into the skillet. Drain the pasta thoroughly, add to the skillet and toss to coat. Divide among warmed serving plates, passing the grated Parmesan or Romano cheese separately.

Makes about 4 cups

**NOTE** - The sauce will keep refrigerated up to a week and in the freezer up to 3 months. Cool the sauce to room temperature before refrigerating or freezing.