

CROQUE MONSIEUR

MAKES 4 SANDWICHES

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, plus more for spreading, room temperature
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 cup milk
- ½ teaspoon coarse salt
- Pinch of freshly ground nutmeg
- Pinch of cayenne pepper
- Pinch of freshly ground black pepper
- 8 slices rustic French or firm white sandwich bread
- ¼ cup Dijon or whole-grain mustard
- ½ pound cooked ham, thinly sliced
- ½ pound Gruyère cheese, thinly sliced, plus 1 cup freshly grated (about 2 ounces)

1. Make béchamel sauce: Melt butter in a small saucepan over medium heat until just starting to bubble. Add flour, and cook, whisking constantly, until smooth but not browned, about 3 minutes.
2. Whisking constantly, slowly add milk; continue cooking while whisking until mixture has thickened, about 3 minutes more. Remove from heat, and add salt, nutmeg, cayenne, and black pepper. Transfer to a bowl; place plastic wrap directly on surface of sauce, and set aside.
3. Heat broiler. Heat a griddle or large cast-iron skillet over medium-low heat. Smear one side of bread slices with mustard. Top 4 slices with a layer each of ham and cheese; cover with remaining 4 bread slices, pressing gently to adhere. Generously butter outer sides, spreading it all the way to the edges.
4. Place sandwiches on griddle or in skillet. Cook until golden brown and cheese has melted, 3 to 4 minutes a side. Transfer to work surface; divide béchamel sauce evenly over tops, spreading to edges; sprinkle with grated cheese.
5. Transfer to broiler, and cook until topping is melted and golden, 2 to 3 minutes. Serve immediately.

SOMETIMES YOU'LL ENCOUNTER THE CROQUE MADAME; THIS CROQUE MONSIEUR WITH AN EGG ON TOP IS OFTEN MADE WITH CHICKEN INSTEAD OF HAM.



FANCY The croque monsieur—literally “mister crunch”—is at the elegant end of the grilled cheese spectrum. First served in 1910 at a Paris café, this ham sandwich with rich béchamel sauce has become a fixture on many casual menus. It is topped with cheese and then grilled under the broiler (right).

