

Croque-Madame

<http://butcherblockco.com/blog/mothers-day-brunch-croque-madame/>

Recipe courtesy of Claire Hoenke

- 7 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 2 cups whole milk
- 1 ½ cups grated Gruyère cheese, divided
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 8 slices of the best quality deli ham
- 8 slices of good bread
- 4 fresh eggs
- 4 teaspoons Dijon mustard

Start by making your béchamel. In a 1 ½ quart heavy saucepan, melt 5 tablespoons of the butter over medium heat. Add the flour and whisk, cooking the roux until it is golden, about 2 to 3 minutes. Whisk in the milk and bring it just to a boil, whisking constantly. Reduce the heat and simmer, whisking occasionally, until the sauce thickens, about 5 minutes. Add the salt, nutmeg, and half of the shredded cheese and stir until the cheese is completely melted. Remove the pan from heat and cover it while you assemble the sandwiches.

Preheat the broiler with a rack in the top third of the oven. Prep a baking sheet with a piece of parchment paper. Lay the slices of bread out, spreading a spoonful of béchamel on four of them and topping with the remaining shredded cheese. On the other four slices, spread the mustard and top each with two slices of the ham. Flip the ham side onto the cheese side and heat about a tablespoon of the remaining butter on a skillet or griddle. When the griddle is hot, carefully grill each sandwich on both sides until they are golden brown and the cheese is melted. Move the sandwiches onto the prepared baking sheet and top each one with about 1/3 cup of the béchamel. Broil the sandwiches until the sauce is bubbling, then turn off the broiler and move the pan to the lower third of the oven to keep warm.

Add the remaining butter to the skillet and fry the eggs sunny-side-up, until whites are just set and yolks are still runny. Top each sandwich with an egg and serve. I put the remaining sauce in a little pitcher so we could add more as we saw fit, and I went a little crazy with the pepper grinder.