



## Open-Faced Croque-Monsieur

At Pastis in New York City, the chefs prepare a rich, open-faced croque-monsieur. Generously sauced with béchamel, it must be eaten with a fork and knife. If you prefer a sandwich that you can eat with your hands, brush on a thin layer of béchamel, just under 1 Tbs. per sandwich.

For a Pastis-style sandwich that requires utensils to eat, use about 1/4 cup béchamel. The perfect complement to this croque-monsieur is a simple salad of mixed baby greens dressed with a vinaigrette of extra-virgin olive oil, fresh lemon juice, salt and freshly ground pepper.

### FOR THE BÉCHAMEL:

3 Tbs. unsalted butter  
6 Tbs. all-purpose flour  
2 cups hot milk  
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste  
Freshly grated nutmeg, to taste

### FOR THE SANDWICHES:

1-lb. loaf country-style bread, sliced  
1/2 lb. sliced ham  
1/2 lb. grated Gruyère cheese



To make the béchamel, in a 2-quart saucepan over low heat, melt the butter. Whisk in the flour until smooth and cook, whisking constantly, until the mixture smells nutty and fragrant, about 1 minute. Slowly add the hot milk, whisking constantly, until the mixture is smooth and lump-free. Season with salt, pepper and nutmeg. Increase the heat to medium, bring to a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until the sauce is thickened, about 5 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and keep warm.

Position a rack in the lower third of an oven and preheat to 450°F.

To assemble the sandwiches, lightly butter a baking sheet. Place the bread slices on the sheet and layer the ham evenly on the bread. For each sandwich, spread 1 to 2 Tbs. of the béchamel sauce over the ham, or as desired. Sprinkle the cheese evenly over the béchamel. Bake until the cheese melts and evenly browns, and the bread is golden and crisp on the bottom, 12 to 15 minutes. Serve immediately. Serves 4 to 6.