

## BUVETTE'S CROQUE-MONSIEUR

A beloved sandwich, a croque-monsieur is basically a grilled cheese as seen through a decadent French lens. A constant on my menu at Buvette, we serve plenty of these at lunch and also late at night when we put them back on the menu after eleven o'clock. They are great for a party since you can assemble a tray of croques ahead of time and simply pop them into the oven when guests arrive.



MAKES 4 SANDWICHES

1 recipe Bechamel Sauce (see below)  
2 tablespoons whole-grain mustard  
8 slices bread  
8 slices cooked ham, preferably prosciutto cotto  
1 cup coarsely grated Gruyere cheese  
1 teaspoon herbes de Provence

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Stir the bechamel together with the mustard and, dividing the mixture evenly, spread it on one side of each slice of bread, being sure to spread the bechamel from corner to corner on each slice.

On 4 of the prepared slices of bread, place 2 slices of ham directly on top of the bechamel and then sprinkle 2 tablespoons of the Gruyere on top of the ham. Place the remaining 4 bechamel-coated slices of bread on top of the Gruyere, bechamel side up. Place the 4 sandwiches onto the prepared baking sheet. Sprinkle each sandwich with a small pinch of herbes de Provence and 2 tablespoons of the remaining Gruyere. Place the sandwiches in the oven and bake until the cheese is totally melted and is starting to crisp, about 10 minutes.

### CROQUE-FORESTIER

For vegetarian friends, make Croque-Forestiers by simply exchanging the ham for a handful of mushrooms that have been roasted with olive oil, salt, sage, and rosemary.

### CROQUE-MADAME

To gild the lily, make Croque-Madames by placing a fried egg on top of each sandwich (works on any version of the sandwich). It should rest like a good hat, leaning *just so*.

## BUVETTE'S BECHAMEL

### BECHAMEL

This makes a very dense bechamel, perfect for spreading on bread for "croques," or for using in a mixture for a croquette. If you need a thinner, looser bechamel, such as for a cheese sauce, simply add more milk.

[MAKES 3/4 CUP]

1½ tablespoons unsalted butter  
2 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour  
½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg  
¾ cup whole milk  
Coarse salt

Combine the butter, flour, and nutmeg in a heavy saucepan over medium heat. Cook, stirring with a wooden spoon, until barely browned, 3 to 4 minutes. Gradually stir in the milk and cook, stirring constantly until the mixture thickens and begins to pull away from the edges of the pan, 3 to 4 minutes; you are looking for a mixture that has the consistency of a thick pudding. It will stick to the spoon and should have some elasticity. Remove the bechamel from the heat and season to taste with salt.