

How to Make a Roux

A roux is simply fat and flour cooked together. It thickens sauces, gravy, soups and other dishes, and the longer it cooks, the darker and more flavorful it becomes.

PREP 2 MIN • COOK BY COLOR • THICKENS ABOUT 2 CUPS LIQUID • LEVEL EASY

Before You Start

Roux can be made ahead. Pale roux is quick enough to make as needed, while darker roux can be useful to prepare in advance because it takes longer and requires attention.

What You Need

Fat	2 tbsp, such as butter or another cooking fat appropriate to the dish
Flour	2 tbsp all-purpose flour
Liquid	About 2 cups when using the roux as a thickener, depending on the final dish
Tools	Saucepan or skillet; whisk or wooden spoon

Instructions

1. Heat 2 tablespoons fat in a saucepan or skillet over medium to medium-low heat.
2. Add 2 tablespoons flour and whisk or stir until no dry flour remains and the mixture is smooth.
3. Keep stirring and cook until the roux reaches the color your dish needs. Use the color and smell cues below, not the clock.
4. When adding liquid, whisk it in gradually at first so the roux incorporates smoothly, then continue with the amount your recipe requires.

Cook to the Color



White

Pale cream, no browning

Stir just until the raw flour smell is gone. Use for cream sauces and other pale, creamy dishes.

Usually the quickest stage.



Blond

Light golden, like straw

Smells slightly nutty. Use for gravies, plus many sauces and soups.

A little longer than white.



Brown

Medium brown, like peanut butter

Noticeably nutty and toasted. Use for richer, darker sauces and stews. More flavor, less thickening power.

Takes noticeably longer; stay close.



Dark

Deep brown, like milk chocolate or darker

Deep toasted flavor and the least thickening power. Use for dishes such as gumbo.

The longest stage, sometimes close to an hour for a big batch.

Safety tip

Stir continuously, adjust the heat as needed, and do not leave a darkening roux unattended.

Cook by color, not the clock

Your heat level, your pan and how much roux you are making all change how long each stage takes.

Tips

- Equal parts fat and flour by volume is an easy beginner baseline.
- If the roux smells scorched or has black flecks, discard it and start again; burned flour will make the finished dish bitter.
- The darker the roux becomes, the less thickening power it has.

Jane’s Note

Stay at the stove while it cooks, especially for a darker roux. A few seconds away is all it takes for the flour to scorch.

Storage

Roux can be cooled and refrigerated in a covered container. Reheat gently before incorporating it into a dish.

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