JANE SMITH LIFESTYLE

Italian Croque Monsieur

Prep: 20 min | Cook: 15 min | Serves: 4 sandwiches



A golden, crisp ham-and-provolone sandwich topped with creamy Parmesan béchamel and browned until bubbling. It brings the cozy feel of a classic croque monsieur to the table with familiar Italian-style cheeses and herbs.

Ingredients

- For the sandwiches:
- 8 slices thick sourdough or country-style bread
- 8 thin slices deli ham
- 8 slices provolone cheese
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons softened butter, for the bread
- For the Parmesan béchamel:
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 cup whole milk, warmed
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt, or to taste
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ½ cup finely grated Parmesan cheese, divided
- Fresh thyme leaves or chopped parsley, for serving (optional)

Directions

1. Heat the oven to 425°F. Set a rack in the upper third of the oven and line a baking sheet with

parchment.

2. Make the béchamel: Melt 2 tablespoons butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Whisk in the flour and cook for about 1 minute, whisking constantly.
3. Gradually whisk in the warm milk. Cook, whisking, for 3 to 5 minutes until smooth and thick enough to coat a spoon. Stir in the nutmeg, salt, pepper, 1 teaspoon Dijon and ¼ cup of the Parmesan. Remove from the heat.
4. Spread Dijon on the inside of each bread slice. Layer four slices with ham and provolone, then top with the remaining bread slices.
5. Butter the outside of each sandwich. Toast in a large skillet over medium heat, about 2 to 3 minutes per side, until both sides are golden. Work in batches if needed.
6. Transfer the sandwiches to the prepared baking sheet. Spoon béchamel over each top slice and sprinkle with the remaining ¼ cup Parmesan.
7. Bake for 4 to 5 minutes until the cheese is hot and bubbling. Broil for 1 to 2 minutes, watching closely, until the tops are browned.
8. Rest for 2 minutes, garnish with thyme or parsley if desired, and serve warm.

Jane's Note

Use low-moisture provolone so the filling melts without making the bread soggy. The béchamel can be made a day ahead and refrigerated; warm it gently with a splash of milk before using. Watch closely under the broiler because the Parmesan top can brown quickly.

Storage: Best served fresh. Refrigerate leftovers in an airtight container for up to 2 days. Reheat on a baking sheet at 350°F until hot and crisp; the microwave will soften the bread.

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