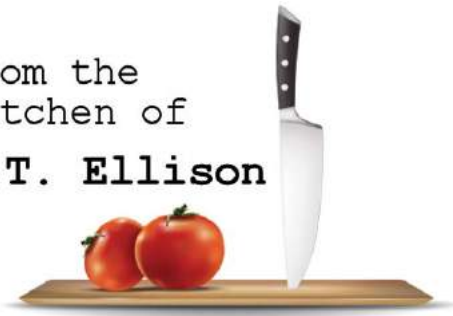


From the
kitchen of
J.T. Ellison



Ingredients

- ✓ 2 Tbsp butter
- ✓ 2 Tbsp flour
- ✓ 1 cup milk (I prefer unsweetened almond milk)
- ✓ Salt, freshly ground pepper, and a pinch of nutmeg, to taste
- ✓ 6 ounces Gruyère cheese, grated (about 1 ½ cups grated)
- ✓ ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese (packed)
- ✓ 8 slices of good harvest French or Italian loaf bread
- ✓ 12 ounces baked ham, sliced thin
- ✓ good Dijon mustard — I like Maille Dijon

Croque Monsieur

I've always been a fan of this open-face Parisian classic, and I ate my way through the brasseries and cafes trying as many as I could.

Finding the perfect recipe to share is difficult, for every Croque Monsieur is not created equal. From béchamels and cheeses and breads to the placement of the Dijon mustard, even the number of slices of bread, are rarely agreed upon. Here's one I liked, that's both simple, and tasty, with, of course, some Ellison variations. You'll note this calls for Gruyère cheese, and (gasp) a little Parmesan, or even some grated Grana Padano. I've found this combination gives things a little more flavor, as the traditional Emmental (Swiss) cheese can be somewhat bland.

Directions

- Preheat oven to 400°F.
- To make the béchamel sauce: Melt butter in a small saucepan on medium/low heat until it just starts to bubble. Add the flour and cook, stirring until smooth, about 2 minutes. Slowly add the almond milk, whisking continuously, cooking until thick. Remove from heat.
- Add the salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Stir in the Parmesan and 1/4 cup of the grated Gruyère. Set aside.
- Butter your bread, spread on a baking sheet, and toast them in the oven, a few minutes each side, until lightly toasted.
- (Alternatively, you can assemble these as sandwiches, with a top and bottom, and sprinkle the last of the cheese on top before broiling, but every one I ate was open-face.)
- Lightly brush the toasted slices with béchamel and mustard. Add the ham slices and about 1 cup of the remaining Gruyère cheese.
- Place on a broiling pan. Bake in the oven for 5 minutes, then turn on the broiler and broil for an additional 3 to 5 minutes, until the cheese topping is bubbly and lightly browned.

If you top this sandwich with a fried egg it becomes a Croque Madame.

Gosh, now I'm hungry!

*As seen in J.T. Ellison's newsletter. For more recipes, visit JTEllison.com.
Want a wine to go with your recipe? Check out J.T.'s wine blog,
The Wine Vixen, at TheWineVixen.com.*

