

Hollandaise sauce

Ingredients

White wine vinegar

5 black peppercorns

2 egg yolks

125g unsalted butter

1 lemon

salt and cracked black pepper to taste

Method

Start by adding a splash of white wine vinegar to a small saucepan with the peppercorns and reduce by half over a low heat. Strain the peppercorns and set aside to cool.

Gently melt the butter over a low heat so that the white solids fall to the bottom of the pan – you don't want that in your hollandaise sauce.

To a heatproof bowl placed over a saucepan of barely simmering water, add the egg yolks and the cooled reduced vinegar. Whisk until the egg yolks thicken and reach ribbon stage – hold the whisk just above the eggs making a figure of 8 while the excess egg drops off the whisk. The figure of 8 should hold for about 2 seconds.

(You may need to control the temperature of the eggs while whisking:

1. don't let the water become more than a simmer as this will scramble the eggs

2. lift the bowl away from the simmering water every so often to reduce the temperature of the eggs.)

Slowly add the melted butter while whisking and you will see the sauce become thick and creamy. Stop adding the butter just before you get to the bottom of the saucepan to keep those white solids out. If it gets too thick, add a splash of cold water, but remember that Hollandaise is meant to be quite thick and served barely warm.

Season with the salt and cracked black pepper and a good squeeze of lemon juice.

Your hollandaise sauce is ready for the perfect breakfast – eggs benedict (see below.)

Also goes well with asparagus pan fried in foaming butter or add a handful of chopped tarragon and finely diced shallot to make a Bearnaise sauce – a perfect accompaniment for steak.

Eggs Benedict

Bring a large pan of water to the boil, add 3 tablespoons of white wine vinegar then reduce to a simmer.

Crack each egg into a ramekin or coffee cup. Using a whisk, swirl the water to create a vortex to drop the eggs in, one at a time. Cook for 2 – 3 minutes then remove with a slotted spoon and place on kitchen towel to remove any excess moisture.

Split and toast muffins. Top with ham (try my cola & black treacle ham recipe) or smoked bacon, then the egg and finish with a generous spoonful of hollandaise sauce.