

COOKING SKILLS

Cooking Skills: Sauces 1

9 Chapters

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COOKING SKILLS: SAUCES 1

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Cooking Skills: Sauces 1

Chapter 1 · Know Your Sauces

SKILL GOAL

Name the five ways to make a sauce, choose the right one, and season a sauce until it tastes finished.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A sauce is a flavoured liquid with the right thickness. There are only five ways to get that thickness. **Starch** (cornflour or arrowroot mixed with cold water) gives a clear, glossy sauce. **Flour** cooked in butter, a roux, gives an opaque, creamy sauce. **Reduction** boils away water until the sauce is stronger and thicker. An **emulsion** whisks fat into liquid. A **purée** blends soft cooked vegetables into the liquid. Most sauces use one method and a few use two.

Taste is as important as thickness. Taste a sauce at the end and ask four questions: does it need **salt** (flat), **acid** (heavy or dull; add lemon or vinegar), **sweetness** (too sharp; add a pinch of sugar or honey) or **fat** (thin and harsh; add butter or cream)? Mayonnaise and hollandaise are in Cooking Skills: Eggs 2, chapters 7 and 8.

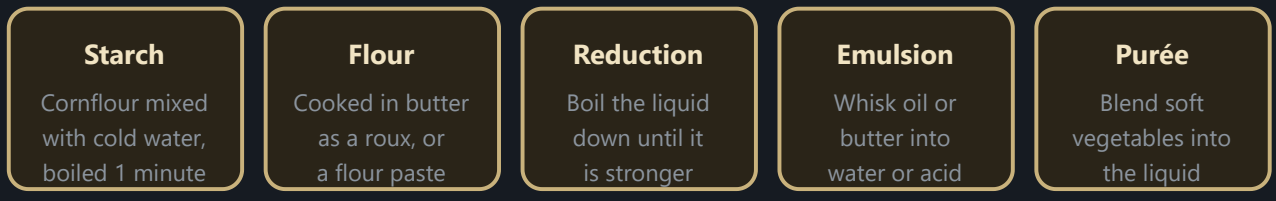


Figure 1. Five ways to make a sauce: most use one, and a few combine two.

The method

- **Decide how thick you want it** before you start: it should coat the back of a spoon, or pour like single cream.
- **Mix cornflour with cold water first,** then stir it into a hot sauce and boil for a minute.
- **Reduce in a wide pan:** a wider surface means faster evaporation.
- **Add salt last,** especially if the sauce is reducing, because it gets saltier as it shrinks.
- **Taste, then adjust** with salt, acid, sweetness or fat, one at a time.

METHOD	EXAMPLES	LOOKS	WATCH OUT FOR
Starch	Soy glaze, stir-fry sauces	Clear and glossy	Lumps if added to hot liquid
Flour (roux)	White sauce, gravy	Opaque and creamy	Floury taste if undercooked
Reduction	Stock glaze, pan sauces	Dark and intense	Too salty if reduced too far
Emulsion	Butter sauce, dressings	Pale and creamy	Splitting if too hot or too fast
Purée	Vegetable sauces, soups	Smooth, matte	Hot liquid in a blender

HOT SAUCES, BLENDERS AND ALLERGENS

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Blending hot liquids: hot liquid expands in a sealed blender and can blow the lid off and scald you. Let it cool for a few minutes, fill the jug no more than half, hold a folded cloth over the lid, and start on low. A stick blender in a deep pan avoids the problem.

Allergens: soy sauce contains soy and gluten; butter is milk; flour contains gluten; stock may contain celery. Use cornflour, tamari or plant butter where needed.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A cornflour-thickened soy glaze

10 minutes | 4 portions | thickening with cornflour and cold water

A shiny, savoury glaze for noodles, rice, vegetables or grilled meat. The cornflour is mixed with cold water first, so it blends smoothly, then boiled for a minute to lose its raw taste.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

3 tbsp	soy sauce
150 ml	water or low-salt stock
1 tbsp	honey
1 tsp	fresh ginger, grated
1	garlic clove, crushed
2 tsp	cornflour
2 tbsp	cold water
1 tsp	rice vinegar

1. Put the soy sauce, water or stock, honey, ginger and garlic in a small pan and bring to a simmer for 3 minutes.
2. Mix the cornflour with the cold water until smooth. Take the pan off the heat, stir in the cornflour mixture, then return to the heat and stir until it boils and thickens, about **1 minute**.
3. Stir in the vinegar, taste, and serve over rice, noodles or grilled vegetables.

HOT SAUCE AND ALLERGENS

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Allergens: soy sauce contains soy and gluten. Use tamari for a gluten-free glaze.

> **Cornflour:** cornflour thickens as it boils. Don't boil it for much longer than a minute, or it thins again.

LEVEL 2 · EMULSION

A butter and lemon sauce

10 minutes | 4 portions | whisking cold butter into a hot reduction

A light, glossy sauce for fish, chicken or vegetables. The lemon and water are boiled down a little, and then cold butter is whisked in a cube at a time, so the fat and liquid join into a creamy emulsion. Keep it gentle; boiling it will make it split.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1	lemon, juiced
4 tbsp	water
60 g	cold butter, in small cubes
1 tbsp	chopped parsley
1 pinch	flaked sea salt

1. Simmer the lemon juice and water in a small pan for 2 to 3 minutes until reduced by about half.
2. Turn the heat right down. Whisk in the butter **one cube at a time,** waiting for each to melt before adding the next, until the sauce is creamy and pale.
3. Take it off the heat, stir in the parsley and salt, and serve at once. Don't boil it again.

> **HOT PAN AND BUTTER**
>
> **Hot sauce:** a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.
>
> **Splitting:** if the sauce turns oily, take it off the heat and whisk in a spoonful of cold water to bring it back.
>
> **Milk:** butter is dairy. A plant butter works, but the sauce may be less stable.

LEVEL 2 · REDUCTION

A reduced stock glaze

20 minutes | 4 portions | boiling a liquid down to concentrate it

Good stock boiled down to a quarter of its volume becomes a dark, savoury glaze that coats the back of a spoon. It needs no thickener. Use low-salt stock, because the salt becomes stronger as the liquid shrinks.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

400 ml	low-salt chicken stock
1 tbsp	balsamic vinegar
1 tsp	honey
2	sprigs of thyme
1 tsp	butter

1. Put the stock, vinegar, honey and thyme in a **wide** pan and bring to a boil. Boil steadily for **10 to 12 minutes**, until reduced to about 100 ml (a quarter) and it coats the back of a spoon.
2. Remove the thyme, whisk in the butter, taste and add a little salt only if needed. Serve over roast vegetables, sausages or chicken.

> **HOT PAN, SALT AND STOCK**
>
> **Hot sauce:** a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.
>
> **Stock and salt:** shop stock cubes and granules are very salty. Use low-salt stock, make it up weaker than the pack says, and taste before adding any salt, especially if you plan to reduce the sauce.

LEVEL 3 · PURÉE

A blended carrot and ginger sauce

35 minutes | 4 portions | thickening a sauce by blending cooked vegetables

No flour or cornflour here: the cooked vegetables themselves make the sauce thick. The potato adds body, and a squeeze of lemon at the end brings it to life. Serve with fish, chicken, eggs or rice.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1 tbsp	olive oil
1	onion, chopped
3	carrots, chopped
1	small potato, peeled and chopped
1 tbsp	fresh ginger, grated
500 ml	low-salt vegetable or chicken stock
1 tsp	lemon juice
1 pinch	flaked sea salt

1. Cook the onion in the oil for 5 minutes. Add the carrots, potato and ginger and cook for 2 minutes more.
2. Add the stock, bring to a boil, then cover and simmer for **20 minutes** until the vegetables are very soft.
3. Cool for 5 minutes, then blend until smooth, adding more stock or water if it is too thick. Add the lemon juice and salt and taste.

BLENDING HOT SAUCE

Blending hot liquids: hot liquid expands in a sealed blender and can blow the lid off and scald you. Let it cool for a few minutes, fill the jug no more than half, hold a folded cloth over the lid, and start on low. A stick blender in a deep pan avoids the problem.

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Stock and salt: shop stock cubes and granules are very salty. Use low-salt stock, make it up

> weaker than the pack says, and taste before adding any salt, especially if you plan to reduce the sauce.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Cornflour or flour

Clear and cloudy.

1. Thicken two small pans of stock, one with cornflour mixed with water and one with a paste of equal parts butter and flour, and compare.

Look for: The cornflour sauce is clear and glossy and thickens quickly; the flour sauce is cloudy and matt, and needs a few minutes of simmering to lose its raw taste.

EXPERIMENT

Reduced or thickened

Boiled down or thickened.

1. Boil one pan of stock down to a quarter and thicken another with cornflour, then taste both.

Look for: The reduced stock is more intense and saltier; the thickened one is milder. Use reduction for flavour and starch for body.

EXPERIMENT

Salt, acid and sweetness

Finish a plain sauce.

1. Divide a plain sauce in three and add salt to one, lemon juice to another and a little honey to the third.

Look for: Each changes it in a different way. Learning which one a flat sauce needs is the most useful skill in this course.

EXPERIMENT

Hot or cold thickener

Lumps on purpose.

1. Stir cornflour straight into a hot pan of stock in one, and mix it with cold water first in another.

Look for: The straight cornflour forms lumps; the slurry is smooth. Always mix starch with cold liquid first.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Soy glaze				
Butter and lemon sauce				
Stock glaze				
Carrot and ginger sauce				
Cornflour or flour				
Reduced or thickened				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Salt, acid and sweetness				
Hot or cold thickener				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Lumpy sauce	Starch or flour added to hot liquid	Whisk hard, then strain; next time mix with cold water first
Too thin	Not enough thickener, or not boiled	Boil a little longer, or add more cornflour mixed with water
Too thick	Over-reduced or too much thickener	Add a splash of water or stock
Too salty	Salted before reducing, or salty stock	Add water or unsalted stock, or a squeeze of lemon
Tastes of raw flour or starch	Not cooked long enough	Simmer for a few more minutes
Tastes flat	Needs salt, acid or sweetness	Add a little lemon or vinegar, then salt

HOT SAUCES, STOCK AND LEFTOVERS

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Stock and salt: shop stock cubes and granules are very salty. Use low-salt stock, make it up weaker than the pack says, and taste before adding any salt, especially if you plan to reduce the sauce.

Keeping sauces: cool a sauce quickly in a shallow container within 1 to 2 hours, press cling film onto the surface to stop a skin forming, chill and use within about 2 days. Reheat until steaming hot, stirring. Milk and cream sauces can split when frozen, so freeze other sauces instead.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can name the five ways to thicken a sauce.

☐ I can thicken with cornflour without lumps.

☐ I can reduce a stock to a glaze in a wide pan.

☐ I can whisk butter into a sauce without it splitting.

☐ I can taste a sauce and say whether it needs salt, acid, sweetness or fat.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Sauces 1, chapter 2 is White Sauce: making a roux and adding milk without lumps.

Cooking Skills: Sauces 1

Chapter 2 · White Sauce

SKILL GOAL

Make a smooth white sauce from a roux and milk, at the thickness you want.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

White sauce, also called **béchamel**, is butter, flour and milk, and many other sauces start from it. The butter and flour are cooked together as a **roux**; adding the milk a little at a time while whisking keeps it smooth. The amount of roux sets the thickness: more makes a thick sauce that holds other ingredients together, less makes a thin sauce that pours.

Cook the roux for a minute or two so the flour loses its raw taste, but stop before it browns. Then simmer the finished sauce gently for at least 5 minutes, stirring often, because flour needs time in the liquid to thicken fully and cook through. Cheese sauce is used in baked pasta in Cooking Skills: Pasta 1, chapter 7, and white sauce is used in lasagne in Cooking Skills: Pasta 2, chapter 7.



Figure 2. White sauce in five steps: roux first, then milk a little at a time, then a gentle simmer.

The method

- **Melt the butter gently** and stir in the flour to a thick paste.
- **Cook the roux for 1 to 2 minutes,** stirring, until it smells biscuity but is still pale.

- **Add the milk a splash at a time,** whisking until smooth each time before adding more.
- **Simmer gently for 5 to 10 minutes,** stirring often and scraping the corners, until it coats a spoon.
- **Season at the end,** with nutmeg and white pepper for a classic taste, and cheese off the heat.

TYPE	BUTTER AND FLOUR (PER 500 ML MILK)	THICKNESS	USED FOR
Pouring	25 g each	Like single cream	Lasagne, with fish, vegetables
Coating	40 g each	Coats a spoon	Cheese sauce, parsley sauce
Binding (thick)	50 g each	Holds its shape	Croquettes, fish cakes, filled pancakes

HOT SAUCE, LUMPS AND ALLERGENS

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Lumps: lumps are flour that met liquid too fast. Add the liquid a little at a time while whisking, and if lumps still form, whisk hard off the heat or strain the sauce through a sieve.

Allergens: white sauce contains milk, butter and gluten (flour). Use cornflour (about half the weight of the flour) and plant milk for a dairy-free and gluten-free version, though the taste is different.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A pouring white sauce

15 minutes | 4 portions (500 ml) | making a roux and adding milk without lumps

The basic sauce. A pouring sauce is thin enough to run off a spoon. Use it with vegetables, fish or in a lasagne. Warm the milk if you want to work faster, though cold milk, added slowly, works well too.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

25 g	butter
25 g	plain flour
500 ml	whole or semi-skimmed milk
1	bay leaf
1 pinch	freshly grated nutmeg
1 pinch	flaked sea salt
1 pinch	white or black pepper

1. Melt the butter in a heavy pan over a medium-low heat. Stir in the flour and cook for **1 to 2 minutes,** stirring, without browning.
2. Take the pan off the heat and add a splash of milk, stirring or whisking hard until smooth. Repeat, adding the milk a little at a time, until it is all in. Return to the heat, add the bay leaf.
3. Bring to a gentle boil, stirring, then simmer for **5 to 10 minutes** until it coats the back of a spoon. Remove the bay leaf and season with nutmeg, salt and pepper.

HOT SAUCE AND MILK

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Lumps: lumps are flour that met liquid too fast. Add the liquid a little at a time while whisking, and if lumps still form, whisk hard off the heat or strain the sauce through a sieve.

> **Burning on the base:** milk catches easily. Use a heavy pan, keep the heat low, and scrape the corners with a wooden spoon as you stir.

LEVEL 1 · THICK

A thick binding sauce

15 minutes plus cooling | About 500 ml | making a thick sauce that holds ingredients together

A much thicker sauce, made with more roux, which is used to bind fillings such as croquettes or fish cakes (see Cooking Skills: Potatoes 2, chapter 1). Once chilled it is firm enough to shape.

INGREDIENTS (ABOUT 500 ML)

50 g	butter
50 g	plain flour
500 ml	whole milk
1 pinch	freshly grated nutmeg
1 pinch	flaked sea salt

1. Make a roux with the butter and flour, cooking for 2 minutes.
2. Add the milk very gradually, beating hard after each addition, because a thick roux forms lumps easily.
3. Simmer for 8 to 10 minutes, stirring constantly, until the sauce is very thick and leaves the sides of the pan. Season and cool, covered with cling film pressed onto the surface.

THICK SAUCE AND LUMPS

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Lumps: lumps are flour that met liquid too fast. Add the liquid a little at a time while whisking, and if lumps still form, whisk hard off the heat or strain the sauce through a sieve.

Keeping sauces: cool a sauce quickly in a shallow container within 1 to 2 hours, press cling film onto the surface to stop a skin forming, chill and use within about 2 days. Reheat until steaming hot, stirring. Milk and cream sauces can split when frozen, so freeze other sauces instead.

LEVEL 2 · CHEESE

A cheese sauce

20 minutes | 4 portions | adding cheese to a coating sauce without it going stringy

A coating sauce with Cheddar and a little mustard stirred in off the heat. Serve over cauliflower, broccoli, ham or pasta. Add the cheese a handful at a time, because boiling cheese turns oily and stringy.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

40 g	butter
40 g	plain flour
500 ml	whole or semi-skimmed milk
100 g	mature Cheddar, grated
1 tsp	Dijon mustard
1 pinch	freshly grated nutmeg
1 pinch	black pepper

1. Make a roux with the butter and flour and cook for 1 to 2 minutes. Add the milk gradually, whisking, and simmer for 8 minutes.
2. Take the pan **off the heat.** Stir in the cheese a handful at a time, then the mustard, nutmeg and pepper.
3. Taste: the cheese is usually salty enough. Serve at once, or keep warm over a very low heat without boiling.

HOT SAUCE AND ALLERGENS

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Allergens: contains milk, cheese, gluten and mustard.

Boiling cheese: heat makes cheese sauce oily and stringy. Add cheese off the heat.

LEVEL 2 · HERB

A parsley sauce

20 minutes | 4 portions | finishing a white sauce with herbs and acid

The classic British sauce for ham, bacon, fish or vegetables. A coating sauce with a big handful of parsley stirred in at the end, and a little lemon to cut the richness.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

40 g	butter
40 g	plain flour
500 ml	whole or semi-skimmed milk
4 tbsp	chopped fresh parsley
1 tsp	lemon juice
1 pinch	flaked sea salt
1 pinch	white or black pepper

1. Make a coating white sauce as above: roux for 1 to 2 minutes, milk added gradually, simmer for 8 minutes.
2. Stir in the parsley, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Taste and add a little more lemon if it feels heavy, and serve straight away so the parsley stays green.

> HOT SAUCE AND ALLERGENS
>
> **Hot sauce:** a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.
>
> **Lumps:** lumps are flour that met liquid too fast. Add the liquid a little at a time while whisking, and if lumps still form, whisk hard off the heat or strain the sauce through a sieve.
>
> **Allergens:** contains milk, butter and gluten.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Roux cooked 1 or 5 minutes

Raw and nutty.

1. Make two small batches of sauce, cooking one roux for 30 seconds and the other for 3 to 4 minutes, and taste.

Look for: The briefly cooked roux can taste of raw flour; the longer one is nutty and gives a darker sauce. A minute or two is the sweet spot.

EXPERIMENT

Cold or hot milk

Temperature of the milk.

1. Make one batch with cold milk and one with warmed milk, added to the same roux.

Look for: Warm milk blends in faster with fewer lumps, while cold milk needs slower additions. Either works if added gradually.

EXPERIMENT

Whisk or spoon

Tools matter.

1. Stir one sauce with a wooden spoon and whisk another.

Look for: The whisk smooths out lumps almost at once; the spoon is gentler on the corners. Use both: whisk to blend, spoon to scrape.

EXPERIMENT

Rescuing lumps

Make lumps on purpose.

1. Add all the milk at once to a roux to make a lumpy sauce, then try whisking hard, and then straining some through a sieve.

Look for: Whisking breaks up most lumps, and a sieve removes the rest. A rescued sauce tastes the same as a smooth one.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Pouring white sauce				
Thick binding sauce				
Cheese sauce				
Parsley sauce				
Roux cooked 1 or 5 minutes				
Cold or hot milk				
Whisk or spoon				
Rescuing lumps				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Lumpy sauce	Milk added too fast	Whisk hard off the heat, or strain through a sieve
Tastes of raw flour	Roux or sauce not cooked long enough	Simmer for a few more minutes

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Too thin	Not enough roux or not simmered	Simmer longer, or whisk in a little more flour and butter paste
Too thick	Too much roux or over-reduced	Whisk in a splash of milk
Skin on top	Cooled uncovered	Press cling film onto the surface, or whisk in a splash of milk
Stringy cheese sauce	Boiled after adding the cheese	Add cheese off the heat and keep the heat low

HOT SAUCE, MILK AND LEFTOVERS

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Lumps: lumps are flour that met liquid too fast. Add the liquid a little at a time while whisking, and if lumps still form, whisk hard off the heat or strain the sauce through a sieve.

Keeping sauces: cool a sauce quickly in a shallow container within 1 to 2 hours, press cling film onto the surface to stop a skin forming, chill and use within about 2 days. Reheat until steaming hot, stirring. Milk and cream sauces can split when frozen, so freeze other sauces instead.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can make a roux without browning it.
- ☐ I can add milk to a roux and keep the sauce smooth.
- ☐ I can make a pouring, coating and thick sauce.
- ☐ I can add cheese without making the sauce stringy.
- ☐ I can rescue a lumpy sauce.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Sauces 1, chapter 3 is Velouté and Stock Sauces: using stock instead of milk for a lighter sauce.

Cooking Skills: Sauces 1

Chapter 3 · Velouté and Stock Sauces

SKILL GOAL

Make a lighter sauce by using stock instead of milk, and turn one base into several different sauces.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A **velouté** (French for velvety) is white sauce made with stock instead of milk. The roux is cooked a little longer, for 2 to 3 minutes, until it turns pale gold; this is a **blond roux**, and it adds a nutty flavour. Then hot stock goes in a little at a time. The result is lighter and more savoury than white sauce, and works with chicken, fish, eggs and vegetables.

A velouté is also a **base**: add mushrooms, spices or leeks and you have a new sauce. Stock is the heart of it, so use a good one. Stock itself is the subject of the planned Soups and Stocks 1; until then, use ready-made low-salt stock and taste before salting. For white sauce itself, see Cooking Skills: Sauces 1, chapter 2.



Figure 3. One base, three sauces: a velouté is a starting point as well as a sauce.

The method

- **Cook the roux for 2 to 3 minutes** until pale gold and nutty, but not brown.
- **Use hot stock,** and add it a ladle at a time, whisking after each.
- **Simmer for about 10 minutes,** stirring, so the flour cooks out.
- **Strain for a silky finish** if you want a smooth restaurant-style sauce.
- **Finish with cream, lemon or mustard** to give the sauce its character.

SAUCE	LIQUID	ROUX	GOES WITH
White sauce	Milk	White (1 to 2 minutes)	Vegetables, pasta, ham
Velouté	White stock	Blond (2 to 3 minutes)	Chicken, fish, eggs, vegetables
Mushroom sauce	Velouté and cream	Blond	Chicken, pies, pasta
Curry sauce	Velouté and spice	Blond	Rice, chicken, vegetables

HOT SAUCE, STOCK AND ALLERGENS

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Stock and salt: shop stock cubes and granules are very salty. Use low-salt stock, make it up weaker than the pack says, and taste before adding any salt, especially if you plan to reduce the sauce.

Lumps: lumps are flour that met liquid too fast. Add the liquid a little at a time while whisking, and if lumps still form, whisk hard off the heat or strain the sauce through a sieve.

Allergens: contains gluten (flour) and milk (butter, cream). Stock may contain celery. Mustard is an allergen. Use cornflour and plant cream for a gluten-free, dairy-free version.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A chicken velouté

20 minutes | 4 portions (500 ml) | a blond roux and hot stock

The base for everything else in this chapter. Cook the roux until it smells nutty, add hot stock gradually, and simmer. Taste before adding any salt, since the stock may already be salty.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

30 g	butter
30 g	plain flour
500 ml	hot low-salt chicken stock
1 tsp	lemon juice
1 pinch	white pepper

1. Melt the butter over a medium-low heat, stir in the flour and cook for **2 to 3 minutes,** stirring, until pale gold and smelling nutty.
2. Add the hot stock a ladle at a time, whisking after each addition until smooth.
3. Simmer gently for **10 minutes,** stirring, until it coats a spoon. Add the lemon juice and pepper, taste, and add salt only if needed. Strain for extra smoothness.

> **HOT SAUCE AND STOCK**
>
> **Hot sauce:** a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.
>
> **Stock and salt:** shop stock cubes and granules are very salty. Use low-salt stock, make it up weaker than the pack says, and taste before adding any salt, especially if you plan to reduce the sauce.
>
> **Lumps:** lumps are flour that met liquid too fast. Add the liquid a little at a time while whisking, and if lumps still form, whisk hard off the heat or strain the sauce through a sieve.

LEVEL 2 · MUSHROOM

A mushroom sauce

20 minutes | 4 portions | building a sauce on a velouté base

Mushrooms are fried hard until golden before they go into the sauce, because that is where the flavour comes from. Serve with chicken, pies, pasta or baked potatoes.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1	batch of chicken velouté (above)
1 tbsp	butter
250 g	mushrooms, sliced
1	garlic clove, crushed
1 tsp	fresh thyme leaves
100 ml	double cream or whole milk
1 tsp	lemon juice

1. Make the velouté as above and keep it warm.
2. Melt the butter in a wide pan until foaming and fry the mushrooms over a high heat for **6 to 8 minutes** until golden, adding the garlic and thyme for the last minute.
3. Stir the velouté into the mushrooms, add the cream and simmer for 3 minutes. Add the lemon juice, taste and season.

HOT PAN AND ALLERGENS

Hot pan and hot oil: searing and stir-frying use very high heat and spitting oil. Dry the beef first, keep everything ready before you start, use a long spoon and keep children away from the hob.

Allergens: contains gluten, milk and cream; stock may contain celery.

Stock and salt: shop stock cubes and granules are very salty. Use low-salt stock, make it up weaker than the pack says, and taste before adding any salt, especially if you plan to reduce the sauce.

LEVEL 2 · SPICE

A curry sauce from a velouté base

25 minutes | 4 portions | frying spices into a base sauce

A mild, smooth, British-style curry sauce. The curry powder is fried in the onion so it loses its raw taste. Serve with rice (see Cooking Skills: Rice 1), chicken or vegetables.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1	batch of chicken velouté (above)
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1	onion, finely chopped
1	garlic clove, crushed
1 tbsp	mild curry powder
1 tsp	tomato purée
1 tbsp	mango chutney
1 tsp	lemon juice

1. Make the velouté as above and keep it warm. Cook the onion in the oil for 8 minutes until soft and golden, adding the garlic and curry powder for the last **1 minute.**
2. Stir in the purée, then the velouté and chutney, and simmer for 8 to 10 minutes.
3. Blend for a smooth sauce, or leave chunky. Add the lemon juice and taste for salt and sweetness.

BURNING SPICES, HOT SAUCE AND BLENDING

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Blending hot liquids: hot liquid expands in a sealed blender and can blow the lid off and scald you. Let it cool for a few minutes, fill the jug no more than half, hold a folded cloth over the lid, and start on low. A stick blender in a deep pan avoids the problem.

> **Burning spices:** curry powder burns in seconds in a hot pan and tastes bitter. Lower the heat before adding it and stir constantly.

LEVEL 3 · CREAMY

A creamy leek and mustard sauce

25 minutes | 4 portions | softening leeks and finishing with mustard and cream

Leeks cooked slowly in butter until very soft, with wholegrain mustard and cream. A good sauce for fish, chicken or eggs. Mustard goes in at the end so its heat stays bright.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1	batch of chicken velouté (above)
1 tbsp	butter
2	leeks, washed and finely sliced
2 tsp	wholegrain mustard
3 tbsp	double cream
1 tsp	lemon juice

1. Make the velouté as above and keep it warm. Melt the butter and cook the leeks gently with a lid on for **8 to 10 minutes** until completely soft but not browned.
2. Add the velouté and simmer for 3 minutes. Stir in the mustard and cream and heat gently without boiling.
3. Add the lemon juice, taste and season. Serve straight away.

HOT SAUCE AND ALLERGENS

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Allergens: contains mustard, milk and gluten.

Stock and salt: shop stock cubes and granules are very salty. Use low-salt stock, make it up weaker than the pack says, and taste before adding any salt, especially if you plan to reduce the sauce.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Stock cube or fresh stock

Salty and mild.

1. Make two small veloutés, one with a stock cube and one with good ready-made liquid stock, and taste.

Look for: The cube version is often saltier and sharper; liquid stock is rounder. Use half a cube and taste before adding salt.

EXPERIMENT

Blond or brown roux

Pale and darker.

1. Cook one roux for 2 minutes and one for 6, until brown, then make each into a sauce.

Look for: The brown roux gives a deeper, nuttier flavour but thickens less. Blond is a better all-rounder.

EXPERIMENT

Adding cream

With and without.

1. Divide a batch of velouté and finish half with a few spoonfuls of cream.

Look for: The cream makes it softer, richer and rounder, while the plain one is lighter and more savoury.

EXPERIMENT

Straining

Silky and rustic.

1. Strain half the velouté through a sieve and leave half as it is.

Look for: The strained sauce is silkier; the rest is slightly textured. For home cooking either is fine.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Chicken velouté				
Mushroom sauce				
Curry sauce				
Leek and mustard sauce				
Stock cube or fresh stock				
Blond or brown roux				
Adding cream				
Straining				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Lumpy velouté	Cold stock or added too fast	Use hot stock, a ladle at a time, and strain if needed
Too salty	Salty stock or salt added too early	Add water, cream or a squeeze of lemon

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Tastes of flour	Roux or sauce undercooked	Simmer for 10 minutes
Too thick	Too much roux or over-reduced	Whisk in a little stock
Mushroom sauce watery or grey	Mushrooms not browned or crowded	Fry them in a wide pan in batches until golden
Cream split	Boiled after adding	Add cream at the end, heat gently and don't boil

HOT SAUCE, STOCK AND LEFTOVERS

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Stock and salt: shop stock cubes and granules are very salty. Use low-salt stock, make it up weaker than the pack says, and taste before adding any salt, especially if you plan to reduce the sauce.

Keeping sauces: cool a sauce quickly in a shallow container within 1 to 2 hours, press cling film onto the surface to stop a skin forming, chill and use within about 2 days. Reheat until steaming hot, stirring. Milk and cream sauces can split when frozen, so freeze other sauces instead.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can make a blond roux.
- ☐ I can make a velouté with hot stock.
- ☐ I can turn a velouté into a mushroom, curry or leek sauce.
- ☐ I can season a stock-based sauce without over-salting.
- ☐ I can strain a sauce to make it silky.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Sauces 1, chapter 4 is Gravy: turning pan juices into gravy for a roast.

Cooking Skills: Sauces 1

Chapter 4 · Gravy

SKILL GOAL

Make a smooth, savoury gravy for a roast dinner, from a packet or from scratch.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Gravy is the sauce for a roast dinner: the browned juices left in the roasting tin, a little flour to thicken them and some stock. The brown crusty bits stuck to the tin are **pure flavour**, and the stock **dissolves** them (this is called deglazing). Without a roast, onions cooked slowly until brown, or well-browned mushrooms, build the same deep flavour.

Good gravy is not too thick, tastes of the meat or vegetables, and has no lumps or grease. Skim extra fat off the top with a spoon. For a roast beef dinner, see Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 4, and for roast potatoes, see Cooking Skills: Potatoes 1. For making a white or brown roux, see Cooking Skills: Sauces 1, chapters 2 and 3.



Figure 4. From tin to jug in five steps: rest, pour off fat, flour, stock, simmer.

The method

- **Rest the meat on a plate** and use the tin straight away while the crusty bits are still soft.
- **Pour off all but about 2 tablespoons of fat,** and keep every drop of juice.
- **Stir in the flour** over a medium heat for a minute until it looks sandy and smells toasty.

- **Add hot stock a little at a time,** scraping up the crusty bits with a wooden spoon.
- **Simmer for about 5 minutes,** taste for salt, and strain into a warm jug.

GRAVY	FLAVOUR FROM	THICKENED WITH	TIME (APPROXIMATE)
Upgraded granules	Granules and extras	Granules	10 minutes
Tin gravy	Roast juices	Flour	15 minutes
Onion gravy	Browned onions	Flour	35 minutes
Mushroom gravy	Browned mushrooms and soy	Flour	25 minutes

HOT ROASTING TIN, HOT FAT AND ALLERGENS

Hot roasting tin: a roasting tin and its fat are very hot and heavy. Use oven gloves, move the tin onto a heatproof surface and keep children away before you pour or stir.

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Stock and salt: shop stock cubes and granules are very salty. Use low-salt stock, make it up weaker than the pack says, and taste before adding any salt, especially if you plan to reduce the sauce.

Allergens: gravy contains gluten (flour, granules) and often celery. Soy sauce contains soy. Use cornflour (half the weight of flour) for a gluten-free version, and check granules and stock.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Gravy from granules, upgraded

10 minutes | 4 portions | improving a shop-bought base

Gravy granules are quick and reliable, and a few extra ingredients make them taste much closer to home-made. Follow the pack for the amount of granules and water, as brands differ.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

4 tbsp	beef gravy granules (check the pack)
400 ml	boiling water
1 tsp	soy sauce
1 tsp	redcurrant jelly or jam
1 tsp	Dijon mustard
1	sprig of thyme

1. Put the granules in a jug or pan and whisk in the boiling water, following the pack.
2. Add the soy sauce, jelly, mustard and thyme, and simmer for **5 minutes,** stirring.
3. Taste: add a splash more soy if it is flat, or a little more jelly if it is sharp. Remove the thyme and serve.

> **HOT LIQUID AND ALLERGENS**
>
> **Hot sauce:** a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.
>
> **Allergens:** granules contain gluten, and often celery and soy. Check the pack.

LEVEL 2 · FROM THE TIN

Gravy from the roasting tin

15 minutes | 4 portions | deglazing a roasting tin and making a roux with the fat

The classic. Make it while the meat rests, using the juices and crusty bits from a roast beef, chicken or pork. Any good stock will do, and the water from boiling vegetables adds flavour too.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

2 tbsp	fat and juices from the roasting tin
2 tbsp	plain flour
500 ml	hot low-salt stock or vegetable water
1 tsp	Dijon mustard or soy sauce
1 pinch	flaked sea salt
1 pinch	black pepper

1. Move the roast to a plate to rest. Pour most of the fat from the tin into a bowl, leaving about **2 tablespoons** and all the dark juices. Put the tin on a medium heat on the hob.
2. Stir in the flour and cook for **1 minute,** scraping up the crusty bits. Add the stock a little at a time, stirring or whisking until smooth.
3. Add the mustard or soy sauce and simmer for 5 minutes until it coats a spoon. Taste, season and strain into a warm jug.

HOT TIN, HOT FAT AND LUMPS

Hot pot and hot steam: a heavy casserole dish or pan of hot liquid is heavy and scalding. Use oven gloves, lift the lid away from your face so the steam doesn't burn you, keep the handles turned in and never carry a full pot across a busy kitchen.

Lumps: lumps are flour that met liquid too fast. Add the liquid a little at a time while whisking, and if lumps still form, whisk hard off the heat or strain the sauce through a sieve.

Stock and salt: shop stock cubes and granules are very salty. Use low-salt stock, make it up

> weaker than the pack says, and taste before adding any salt, especially if you plan to reduce the sauce.

LEVEL 2 · NO ROAST

Onion gravy

40 minutes | 4 portions | browning onions slowly for flavour

No roasting tin needed: onions cooked slowly until dark and sweet give a deep, rich gravy that suits sausages, mash and pies. Patience is the whole skill; don't rush the onions.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

3	onions, thinly sliced
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
15 g	butter
1 tsp	brown sugar
2 tbsp	plain flour
500 ml	hot low-salt beef stock
1 tsp	balsamic or malt vinegar
2	sprigs of thyme

1. Cook the onions in the oil and butter over a medium-low heat for **25 minutes,** stirring now and then, until deep golden brown. Add the sugar for the last 5 minutes.
2. Stir in the flour and cook for 1 minute, then add the stock a little at a time, stirring. Add the thyme.
3. Simmer for 8 to 10 minutes. Stir in the vinegar, taste, and remove the thyme.

BURNING ONIONS, HOT SAUCE AND ALLERGENS

Hot pan and hot oil: searing and stir-frying use very high heat and spitting oil. Dry the beef first, keep everything ready before you start, use a long spoon and keep children away from the hob.

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Allergens: contains gluten and milk (butter); stock may contain celery.

LEVEL 3 · VEGETARIAN

A vegetarian mushroom gravy

30 minutes | 4 portions | building a deep meat-free gravy

Browned mushrooms, onion, tomato purée and soy sauce give the savoury depth that meat juices would. It is just as good over roast potatoes and nut roast as the meat versions are over a roast.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

2 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1	onion, finely chopped
250 g	mushrooms, finely chopped
2	garlic cloves, crushed
2 tbsp	plain flour
1 tsp	tomato purée
500 ml	hot low-salt vegetable stock
1 tbsp	soy sauce
1	sprig of thyme

1. Cook the onion in the oil for 5 minutes. Add the mushrooms and cook over a high heat for **8 to 10 minutes,** stirring, until deep brown and dry, adding the garlic at the end.
2. Stir in the flour and purée for 1 minute, then add the stock a little at a time. Add the soy sauce and thyme.
3. Simmer for 8 minutes. Blend for a smooth gravy, or leave as it is, then taste and season.

HOT PAN, BLENDING AND ALLERGENS

Hot pan and hot oil: searing and stir-frying use very high heat and spitting oil. Dry the beef first, keep everything ready before you start, use a long spoon and keep children away from the hob.

Blending hot liquids: hot liquid expands in a sealed blender and can blow the lid off and scald you. Let it cool for a few minutes, fill the jug no more than half, hold a folded cloth over the lid, and start on low. A stick blender in a deep pan avoids the problem.

> **Allergens:** contains gluten and soy. Check the stock for celery.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Flour or cornflour

Cloudy and glossy.

1. Make two small gravies from the same stock, thickening one with flour in the fat and one with a cornflour and cold water mix.

Look for: The flour gravy is opaque and savoury, with the roasted flavour; the cornflour one is clearer and glossier. Cornflour is gluten-free.

EXPERIMENT

Stock cube or good stock

Salt and flavour.

1. Make two gravies, one with a stock cube made up as the pack says and one with good liquid stock.

Look for: The cube is often saltier and flatter. A half-strength cube plus a little soy usually tastes better.

EXPERIMENT

Browned onions

Pale and dark.

1. Cook onion for 5 minutes in one pan and for 25 in another, then make each into gravy.

Look for: The longer-cooked onions give a darker, sweeter, more savoury gravy. Time turns onions into flavour.

EXPERIMENT

Straining

Smooth and rustic.

1. Strain half of a tin gravy and leave half as it is.

Look for: The strained gravy is smooth and clear; the other has bits of crust and onion. Pick whichever you prefer.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Upgraded granule gravy				
Tin gravy				
Onion gravy				
Mushroom gravy				
Flour or cornflour				
Stock cube or good stock				
Browned onions				
Straining				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Lumpy gravy	Stock added too fast or cold	Whisk hard, then strain; use hot stock next time
Greasy gravy	Too much fat left in the tin	Skim with a spoon or drag a piece of kitchen paper across the top

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Pale and bland	No browning	Add soy sauce, a little tomato purée or browned onions
Too thin	Not enough flour or not simmered	Simmer longer, or add a little cornflour mixed with cold water
Too salty	Salty stock or granules	Add water, a pinch of sugar or a squeeze of lemon
Tastes of flour	Flour not cooked	Simmer for a few more minutes

HOT TIN, HOT SAUCE AND LEFTOVERS

Hot pot and hot steam: a heavy casserole dish or pan of hot liquid is heavy and scalding. Use oven gloves, lift the lid away from your face so the steam doesn't burn you, keep the handles turned in and never carry a full pot across a busy kitchen.

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Keeping sauces: cool a sauce quickly in a shallow container within 1 to 2 hours, press cling film onto the surface to stop a skin forming, chill and use within about 2 days. Reheat until steaming hot, stirring. Milk and cream sauces can split when frozen, so freeze other sauces instead.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can make gravy from granules taste better.

☐ I can use roasting tin juices and flour to make gravy.

☐ I can brown onions slowly for flavour.

☐ I can make a vegetarian gravy with real depth.

☐ I can fix a lumpy, greasy or pale gravy.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Sauces 1, chapter 5 is Tomato and Vegetable Sauces: simmering, roasting and blending for smooth sauces.

Cooking Skills: Sauces 1

Chapter 5 · Tomato and Vegetable Sauces

SKILL GOAL

Simmer, roast and blend vegetables into smooth sauces, and know when a sauce is thick enough.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A vegetable sauce needs no flour. The vegetables themselves give the body: as a tomato sauce simmers, water steams away and the sauce **thickens and sweetens**, and a blender makes it smooth. Roasting does the same job with dry heat, and browns the edges for a deeper flavour.

Tomatoes are acidic, so a small pinch of sugar often balances them, and a little oil gives a glossy finish. Tinned tomatoes are picked ripe and are better than pale winter tomatoes. Pasta sauces are in Cooking Skills: Pasta 1, chapters 3 and 5, so this chapter covers pizza, roasted and barbecue-style sauces and a red pepper sauce for fish, chicken or pasta.



Figure 5. Tomato sauce thickens with time: watch the spoon, not the clock.

The method

- **Start with a soft base:** onion and garlic cooked gently in oil, so they sweeten rather than burn.

- **Simmer uncovered** so the water can steam away, and stir often so it does not catch on the bottom.
- **Test the thickness** by dragging a spoon across the pan: the trail should hold for a second or two.
- **Season at the end,** when the sauce has reduced and the flavour is concentrated.
- **Blend for a smooth sauce,** or leave it chunky, and taste for sharpness and sweetness.

SAUCE	METHOD	TEXTURE	GOES WITH
Pizza sauce	Quick simmer	Thick, spreadable	Pizza, flatbreads
Roasted tomato	Roast, then blend	Smooth, sweet and deep	Pasta, fish, soups
Red pepper sauce	Roast, then blend	Silky and smoky	Chicken, fish, vegetables
Barbecue-style	Long simmer	Thick and sticky	Ribs, burgers, chicken

HOT SAUCE, BLENDING AND HOT SUGAR

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Blending hot liquids: hot liquid expands in a sealed blender and can blow the lid off and scald you. Let it cool for a few minutes, fill the jug no more than half, hold a folded cloth over the lid, and start on low. A stick blender in a deep pan avoids the problem.

Hot sugar: boiling sugar and fruit are much hotter than boiling water and stick to skin like glue. Use a deep pan, a long spoon and oven gloves, stand back when stirring, and never taste straight from the spoon until it has cooled.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A pizza sauce

25 minutes | 4 pizzas (about 300 ml) | simmering until thick

A pizza sauce should be thick enough to spread, or it will make the base soggy. Simmer it until a spoon leaves a clear trail. It needs very little more than tomatoes, garlic and herbs.

INGREDIENTS (4 PIZZAS)

1 tbsp	olive oil
2	garlic cloves, crushed
400 g	tin chopped tomatoes
1 tbsp	tomato purée
1 tsp	dried oregano
1 pinch	sugar
1 pinch	flaked sea salt

1. Warm the oil over a low heat and cook the garlic for **30 seconds** without browning. Add the tomatoes, purée, oregano and sugar.
2. Simmer uncovered for **15 to 20 minutes,** stirring often, until thick enough to leave a trail.
3. Season with salt, blend if you want it smooth, and cool before spreading on a base.

> **HOT SAUCE**
>
> **Hot sauce:** a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.
>
> **Blending hot liquids:** hot liquid expands in a sealed blender and can blow the lid off and scald you. Let it cool for a few minutes, fill the jug no more than half, hold a folded cloth over the lid, and start on low. A stick blender in a deep pan avoids the problem.

LEVEL 2 · ROASTED

A roasted tomato sauce

55 minutes | 4 portions | roasting to concentrate flavour

Roasting drives off water and browns the edges, so a pale tomato becomes sweet and rich. Fresh tomatoes at their best in late summer are ideal, but tinned plum tomatoes work well too.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

800 g	ripe tomatoes, halved
1	onion, cut in wedges
4	garlic cloves, unpeeled
3 tbsp	olive oil
1 tsp	dried oregano
1 pinch	sugar
1 tsp	flaked sea salt

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan, gas 6). Toss the tomatoes, onion and garlic with the oil, oregano and salt in a roasting tin, cut sides up.
2. Roast for **40 to 45 minutes** until soft with browned edges. Squeeze the garlic out of its skins.
3. Blend everything until smooth, add the sugar, taste, and adjust with a splash of water if it is too thick.

> **HOT OVEN, HOT TIN AND BLENDING**
>
> **Hot pot and hot steam:** a heavy casserole dish or pan of hot liquid is heavy and scalding. Use oven gloves, lift the lid away from your face so the steam doesn't burn you, keep the handles turned in and never carry a full pot across a busy kitchen.
>
> **Blending hot liquids:** hot liquid expands in a sealed blender and can blow the lid off and scald you. Let it cool for a few minutes, fill the jug no more than half, hold a folded cloth over the lid, and start on low. A stick blender in a deep pan avoids the problem.

LEVEL 2 · PEPPER

A red pepper sauce

45 minutes | 4 portions | roasting and blending peppers

Roasted red peppers give a smooth, sweet and slightly smoky sauce with a bright colour. It is good over chicken, fish, eggs or pasta, and works hot or cold.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

3	red peppers, halved and deseeded
1	onion, chopped
2	garlic cloves, crushed
2 tbsp	olive oil
1 tsp	smoked paprika
150 ml	hot low-salt vegetable stock
1 tsp	lemon juice

1. Roast the peppers skin side up at 220°C (200°C fan, gas 7) for **25 to 30 minutes** until blistered. Cover in a bowl for 10 minutes, then peel off the skins.
2. Soften the onion in the oil for 8 minutes, add the garlic and paprika for 1 minute, then add the peppers and stock and simmer for 5 minutes.
3. Blend until silky, add the lemon juice, taste and season.

HOT OVEN, STEAM AND BLENDING

Hot pot and hot steam: a heavy casserole dish or pan of hot liquid is heavy and scalding. Use oven gloves, lift the lid away from your face so the steam doesn't burn you, keep the handles turned in and never carry a full pot across a busy kitchen.

Blending hot liquids: hot liquid expands in a sealed blender and can blow the lid off and scald you. Let it cool for a few minutes, fill the jug no more than half, hold a folded cloth over the lid, and start on low. A stick blender in a deep pan avoids the problem.

Stock and salt: shop stock cubes and granules are very salty. Use low-salt stock, make it up

> weaker than the pack says, and taste before adding any salt, especially if you plan to reduce the sauce.

LEVEL 3 · STICKY

A barbecue-style sauce

40 minutes | 8 portions (about 400 ml) | a long simmer for a thick, balanced sauce

Sweet, sharp, smoky and salty at once. This sauce keeps well, so it is worth making a full batch. Brush it on ribs, chicken or burgers near the end of cooking, not at the start, because the sugar burns.

INGREDIENTS (8 PORTIONS)

1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1	small onion, finely chopped
2	garlic cloves, crushed
400 g	tin chopped tomatoes
2 tbsp	tomato purée
3 tbsp	brown sugar
3 tbsp	malt or cider vinegar
1 tbsp	Worcestershire sauce
1 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tsp	smoked paprika

1. Soften the onion in the oil for 6 minutes, add the garlic and paprika for 1 minute, then add everything else.
2. Simmer uncovered for **25 to 30 minutes,** stirring often, until thick and glossy.
3. Blend until smooth, taste, and balance with more sugar, vinegar or soy. Cool and store in a clean jar.

HOT SUGAR, SPITTING SAUCE, ALLERGENS AND STORING

Hot sugar: boiling sugar and fruit are much hotter than boiling water and stick to skin like glue. Use a deep pan, a long spoon and oven gloves, stand back when stirring, and never taste straight from the spoon until it has cooled.

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse

than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Allergens: contains soy, and fish (Worcestershire sauce). Check labels.

Jars and storing: wash jars and lids in hot soapy water, rinse and dry them, then fill while the sauce is hot and cool before chilling. Keep in the fridge, label with the date and use within the time given. If a sauce smells off, looks fizzy or has mould, throw it away.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Tin or fresh

Convenience and season.

1. Make two small batches of pizza sauce, one with tinned tomatoes and one with fresh tomatoes, and taste both.

Look for: Tinned tomatoes are usually sweeter and more consistent out of season; fresh ones are watery unless truly ripe.

EXPERIMENT

Simmered or roasted

Water and dry heat.

1. Cook half your tomatoes by simmering and half by roasting, then blend each.

Look for: The roasted sauce is sweeter, darker and deeper. The simmered one tastes fresher and brighter.

EXPERIMENT

Blended or chunky

Smooth and rustic.

1. Blend half a batch of tomato sauce and leave half as it is.

Look for: The smooth sauce clings and looks glossy. The chunky one has more texture and a fresher taste.

EXPERIMENT

Sugar or none

Sweet and sharp.

1. Divide a plain tomato sauce, add a pinch of sugar to one half and nothing to the other.

Look for: The sugar softens the acidity without making it sweet. Too much turns it to ketchup, so add a little at a time.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Pizza sauce				
Roasted tomato sauce				
Red pepper sauce				
Barbecue-style sauce				
Tin or fresh				
Simmered or roasted				
Blended or chunky				
Sugar or none				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Too watery	Not simmered long enough	Simmer uncovered for longer, stirring
Too sharp or acidic	Underripe tomatoes	Add a pinch of sugar, or a little grated carrot while it simmers
Burnt on the bottom	Heat too high or not stirred	Don't scrape the base; pour the sauce into a clean pan and taste
Dull flavour	Not enough salt or reduction	Season at the end and simmer a little longer
Too thick	Over-reduced	Add a splash of water or stock
Skins in the sauce	Roasted peppers or tomatoes not peeled	Peel peppers after steaming; sieve the sauce

HOT SAUCE, BLENDING AND LEFTOVERS

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Blending hot liquids: hot liquid expands in a sealed blender and can blow the lid off and scald you. Let it cool for a few minutes, fill the jug no more than half, hold a folded cloth over the lid, and start on low. A stick blender in a deep pan avoids the problem.

Keeping sauces: cool a sauce quickly in a shallow container within 1 to 2 hours, press cling film onto the surface to stop a skin forming, chill and use within about 2 days. Reheat until steaming hot, stirring. Milk and cream sauces can split when frozen, so freeze other sauces instead.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can simmer a tomato sauce until it is thick enough.

☐ I can roast vegetables to make a deep sauce.

☐ I can blend a hot sauce safely.

☐ I can balance sharpness with sugar.

☐ I can make a barbecue-style sauce and store it.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Sauces 1, chapter 6 is Pan Sauces and Reductions: deglazing, reducing and finishing with butter, with no alcohol.

Cooking Skills: Sauces 1

Chapter 6 · Pan Sauces and Reductions

SKILL GOAL

Turn the browned bits left in a frying pan into a quick, glossy sauce in five minutes, without alcohol.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A **pan sauce** uses what the meat leaves behind. When you fry chicken, pork or fish, the juices stick and brown on the pan. Pour in a liquid and these bits dissolve into it; this is **deglazing**. Boil the liquid to **reduce** it, so water evaporates and the flavour and body concentrate. Many cooks use wine, but stock, lemon juice and vinegar work just as well and keep the sauce alcohol-free.

Whisking cold butter into a hot, not boiling, sauce off the heat gives a glossy finish; this is called **mounting** with butter. Steak pan sauces are in Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 3. A wide pan reduces faster than a narrow one because more liquid touches the heat.

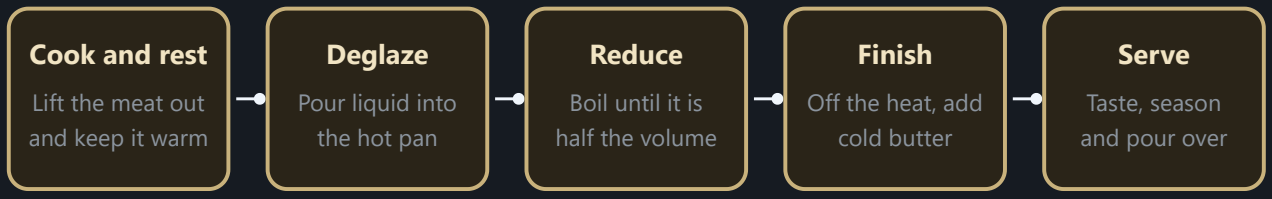


Figure 6. A pan sauce in five steps: cook, deglaze, reduce, finish with butter, serve.

The method

- **Cook the meat or fish first,** then lift it out and keep it warm on a plate. Do not wash the pan.
- **Pour off all but 1 tablespoon of fat,** keeping the brown bits.

- **Deglaze** with stock or lemon juice, scraping the pan with a wooden spoon.
- **Reduce** by boiling hard until the sauce has halved or coats a spoon.
- **Finish off the heat** with cold butter, cream or herbs, then taste for salt, acid and sweetness.

SAUCE	LIQUID	FINISH	GOES WITH
Lemon and caper	Stock and lemon	Butter	Chicken, fish
Mustard cream	Stock	Cream, mustard	Pork, chicken
Honey and soy glaze	Soy and honey	Reduced to sticky	Salmon, chicken thighs
Mushroom cream	Stock	Cream	Steak, chicken, pasta

HOT PAN, REDUCING SAUCE AND ALLERGENS

Hot pan and cooked-on bits: the pan is very hot after frying and the crusty bits spit when liquid hits them. Take the pan off the heat for a moment, pour in the liquid slowly with your face back, and use a long spoon.

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Allergens: contains milk (butter, cream), gluten in some stocks and soy, and fish if using salmon. Mustard is an allergen. Use oil in place of butter and a plant cream for a dairy-free version.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A lemon and caper butter sauce

15 minutes plus the chicken | 2 portions | deglazing with stock and finishing with butter

The simplest pan sauce. Pan-fry two chicken breasts or two thick fish fillets first. The sauce takes only a few minutes while they rest, and it makes a plain piece of meat taste like a restaurant dish.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

2	chicken breasts or fish fillets, pan-fried and resting
100 ml	low-salt chicken stock
1	lemon, juiced
1 tbsp	capers, rinsed
25 g	cold butter, cubed
1 tbsp	chopped parsley

1. After frying, take the meat out to rest. Pour the stock and lemon juice into the hot pan and scrape up the brown bits.
2. Boil hard for **2 to 3 minutes** until reduced by half. Add the capers.
3. Take the pan off the heat and whisk in the cold butter a cube at a time. Add the parsley, taste and spoon over the meat.

> **HOT PAN AND ALLERGENS**
>
> **Hot pan and cooked-on bits:** the pan is very hot after frying and the crusty bits spit when liquid hits them. Take the pan off the heat for a moment, pour in the liquid slowly with your face back, and use a long spoon.
>
> **Allergens:** contains milk (butter); stock may contain celery and gluten.

LEVEL 2 · CREAM

A mustard cream sauce

15 minutes plus the pork | 2 portions | reducing and adding cream and mustard

Cream and mustard are a classic pair, and the sauce is ready in minutes. Fry two pork chops or chicken thighs first. Add the mustard off the heat so it stays lively.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

2	pork chops or chicken thighs, fried and resting
1	small shallot or ¼ onion, finely chopped
150 ml	low-salt chicken stock
100 ml	double cream
2 tsp	wholegrain mustard
1 tsp	lemon juice

1. After frying, take the meat out. Cook the shallot in the pan for 2 minutes, then add the stock and boil for **3 minutes** until reduced by half.
2. Add the cream and simmer for 2 minutes until it coats a spoon.
3. Take it off the heat, stir in the mustard and lemon juice, taste and season. Pour over the meat.

> **HOT PAN AND ALLERGENS**
>
> **Hot pan and cooked-on bits:** the pan is very hot after frying and the crusty bits spit when liquid hits them. Take the pan off the heat for a moment, pour in the liquid slowly with your face back, and use a long spoon.
>
> **Allergens:** contains milk, mustard and often celery.

LEVEL 2 · GLAZE

A honey and soy glaze

15 minutes | 2 portions | reducing to a sticky glaze

A glaze is a sauce reduced until it is almost syrupy. This one is salty, sweet and savoury at once, and turns salmon or chicken thighs a glossy dark brown. Watch it carefully at the end, as sugar goes from glaze to burnt quickly.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

2	salmon fillets or chicken thighs, pan-fried and resting
2 tbsp	honey
2 tbsp	soy sauce
2 tbsp	water
1	garlic clove, grated
1 tsp	grated fresh ginger
1 tsp	lemon juice

1. Mix the honey, soy sauce, water, garlic and ginger. After the meat is cooked, tip the sauce into the pan on a medium heat.
2. Boil for **2 to 3 minutes,** stirring, until it bubbles thickly and coats a spoon. It thickens more as it cools.
3. Return the meat to the pan, turn it in the glaze for 30 seconds, add the lemon juice and serve.

HOT SUGAR, BURNING AND ALLERGENS

Hot sugar: boiling sugar and fruit are much hotter than boiling water and stick to skin like glue. Use a deep pan, a long spoon and oven gloves, stand back when stirring, and never taste straight from the spoon until it has cooled.

Burning: honey and soy can burn in seconds. Lower the heat and stay at the pan.

Allergens: contains soy; salmon is fish.

LEVEL 3 · MUSHROOM

A mushroom cream sauce

25 minutes plus the meat | 2 portions | browning mushrooms and building a sauce around them

Mushrooms fried hard until golden, a spoonful of flour for body, stock and cream. It suits steak, chicken or pasta. Salt the mushrooms at the end, because salt early draws out water and stops them browning.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

1 tbsp	butter
200 g	mushrooms, sliced
1	garlic clove, crushed
1 tsp	plain flour
150 ml	hot low-salt stock
75 ml	double cream
1 tsp	thyme leaves
1 tsp	lemon juice

1. Melt the butter in the pan after cooking the meat, and fry the mushrooms over a high heat for **6 to 8 minutes** until golden. Add the garlic and thyme for 1 minute.
2. Stir in the flour, then the stock a little at a time. Simmer for 3 minutes.
3. Add the cream and heat gently for 2 minutes. Add the lemon juice, taste and season.

> **HOT PAN AND ALLERGENS**
>
> **Hot pan and cooked-on bits:** the pan is very hot after frying and the crusty bits spit when liquid hits them. Take the pan off the heat for a moment, pour in the liquid slowly with your face back, and use a long spoon.
>
> **Allergens:** contains milk, gluten and often celery.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Reduction time

Thin, perfect and too far.

1. Reduce a sauce for 1, 3 and 6 minutes, tasting a spoonful from each.

Look for: A short reduction is thin and weak; the right one coats a spoon; too long is salty and sticky. Taste as you go.

EXPERIMENT

Cold butter off the heat

Glossy and greasy.

1. Whisk cold butter into one sauce off the heat, and add butter to another while it is boiling.

Look for: Off the heat, the butter makes the sauce creamy and glossy. Boiling it makes the butter split into a greasy layer.

EXPERIMENT

Cream or stock only

Rich and light.

1. Make half the mustard sauce with cream and half with stock only.

Look for: The cream sauce is round and rich; the stock sauce is lighter and sharper. Both work.

EXPERIMENT

Wide or narrow pan

Speed.

1. Reduce the same amount of stock in a wide frying pan and in a small saucepan, timing each.

Look for: The wide pan reduces much faster because more surface touches the heat. Use a wide pan for pan sauces.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Lemon and caper sauce				
Mustard cream sauce				
Honey and soy glaze				
Mushroom cream sauce				
Reduction time				
Cold butter off the heat				
Cream or stock only				
Wide or narrow pan				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Sauce too thin	Not reduced enough	Boil harder for another minute, or whisk in a teaspoon of cornflour mixed with cold water

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Sauce split or greasy	Butter added over a boil	Take off the heat, whisk in a splash of cold water or stock
Bitter, burnt taste	Pan was scorched before deglazing	Wipe the pan out and start again with fresh stock
Too salty	Over-reduced or salty stock	Add water, cream or a squeeze of lemon
Pale and flat	Meat not browned	Brown the meat well first; add a little soy sauce
Cream curdled	Boiled with lemon juice or acid	Add lemon at the end, off the heat

HOT PAN, HOT SAUCE AND LEFTOVERS

Hot pan and cooked-on bits: the pan is very hot after frying and the crusty bits spit when liquid hits them. Take the pan off the heat for a moment, pour in the liquid slowly with your face back, and use a long spoon.

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Keeping sauces: cool a sauce quickly in a shallow container within 1 to 2 hours, press cling film onto the surface to stop a skin forming, chill and use within about 2 days. Reheat until steaming hot, stirring. Milk and cream sauces can split when frozen, so freeze other sauces instead.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can deglaze a pan with stock or lemon juice.
- ☐ I can reduce a sauce until it coats a spoon.
- ☐ I can finish a sauce with cold butter off the heat.
- ☐ I can make a sticky glaze without burning it.
- ☐ I can build a mushroom cream sauce.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Sauces 1, chapter 7 is Emulsions and Dressings: holding oil and water together.

Cooking Skills: Sauces 1

Chapter 7 · Emulsions and Dressings

SKILL GOAL

Whisk oil and a water-based liquid into a dressing that stays together, and rescue one that splits.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Oil and water do not mix: shake them together and they separate again in seconds. An **emulsion** is a mixture of the two held together as tiny droplets. In a dressing, an **emulsifier** such as mustard, honey, yogurt or tahini coats the droplets and stops them joining up again. A **temporary** emulsion, like a shaken vinaigrette, separates after a while; a **stable** one, like a mustard or tahini dressing, stays creamy.

A classic vinaigrette is about **3 parts oil to 1 part acid** (vinegar or lemon juice). Adjust to taste: a sharper vinegar needs more oil. Mayonnaise and hollandaise are emulsions made with egg yolk, and are covered in Cooking Skills: Eggs 2, chapters 7 and 8. This chapter covers the egg-free ones.



Figure 7. An emulsion: mustard and whisking turn two layers into one creamy dressing.

The method

- **Start with the acid and the emulsifier** (vinegar or lemon with mustard) and whisk them together with salt.
- **Add the oil slowly,** a few drops at first, whisking all the time, then in a thin stream.
- **Taste on a leaf or a piece of potato,** not on a spoon, because dressing tastes different on food.
- **Adjust:** more oil to soften, more acid to sharpen, a pinch of sugar or honey to balance.
- **Dress the salad just before serving,** a little at a time, so leaves stay crisp.

DRESSING	EMULSIFIER	STAYS TOGETHER	GOES WITH
Simple vinaigrette	None (shaken)	A few minutes	Green salad
Mustard dressing	Mustard	Several days	Potato salad, leaves
Yogurt and herb	Yogurt	A day or two	Chicken, wraps, vegetables
Tahini sauce	Tahini	Several days	Falafel, roast vegetables

ALLERGENS, RAW GARLIC AND STORING

Allergens: mustard, sesame (tahini), milk (yogurt) and sometimes sulphites in vinegar are allergens. Always say what is in a dressing when serving other people.

Raw garlic: raw garlic in oil should be used the same day, or kept in the fridge for no more than a day or two, because garlic stored in oil at room temperature can grow harmful bacteria (general guidance).

Keeping sauces: cool a sauce quickly in a shallow container within 1 to 2 hours, press cling film onto the surface to stop a skin forming, chill and use within about 2 days. Reheat until steaming hot, stirring. Milk and cream sauces can split when frozen, so freeze other sauces instead.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A simple vinaigrette

5 minutes | 4 portions (about 120 ml) | the 3-to-1 ratio

The simplest dressing, shaken in a jar. Use a good oil, and taste on a leaf. Add a spoonful of mustard if you want it to hold together longer.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

6 tbsp	olive or rapeseed oil
2 tbsp	white wine vinegar, cider vinegar or lemon juice
1 tsp	Dijon mustard (optional)
1 pinch	flaked sea salt
1 pinch	sugar

1. Put the vinegar, salt and sugar in a jam jar and stir to dissolve. Add the mustard if using.
2. Add the oil, screw on the lid and **shake hard for 15 seconds** until thick and cloudy.
3. Taste on a leaf and adjust with more oil, vinegar or salt.

> ALLERGENS
>
> **Allergens:** mustard is an allergen, and vinegar may contain sulphites.

LEVEL 2 · MUSTARD

A mustard dressing

10 minutes | 4 portions | a whisked, stable emulsion

Mustard, a little honey and a slow stream of oil make a creamy dressing that stays together for days in the fridge. It is lovely over warm new potatoes or a crisp green salad.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1 tbsp	Dijon mustard
1 tsp	honey
2 tbsp	cider vinegar or lemon juice
6 tbsp	rapeseed or olive oil
1 tbsp	cold water
1 pinch	flaked sea salt

1. Whisk the mustard, honey, vinegar and salt in a bowl set on a damp cloth so it doesn't slide.
2. Add the oil **a few drops at a time,** whisking constantly, then in a thin stream as it thickens.
3. Whisk in the water to loosen, taste, and adjust. Keep in a jar in the fridge for up to about 5 days.

ALLERGENS AND STORING

Allergens: contains mustard.

Keeping sauces: cool a sauce quickly in a shallow container within 1 to 2 hours, press cling film onto the surface to stop a skin forming, chill and use within about 2 days. Reheat until steaming hot, stirring. Milk and cream sauces can split when frozen, so freeze other sauces instead.

LEVEL 2 · CREAMY

A yogurt and herb dressing

10 minutes | 4 portions | using yogurt as the emulsifier

Yogurt makes a light, tangy, creamy dressing without much oil. It is a good dip, a sauce for grilled chicken, or a dressing for a crunchy salad.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

150 g	natural yogurt
1 tbsp	olive oil
1 tbsp	lemon juice
2 tbsp	chopped parsley, chives or mint
1	small garlic clove, grated
1 pinch	flaked sea salt

1. Stir the yogurt, oil, lemon juice and garlic together until smooth.
2. Add the herbs and salt and stir. Add a spoonful of water if it is too thick to pour.
3. Taste, adjust the lemon and salt, and chill for 15 minutes. Use within 2 days.

> **ALLERGENS AND RAW GARLIC**
>
> **Allergens:** contains milk.
>
> **Raw garlic:** raw garlic is strong; use a small clove and keep the dressing chilled.

LEVEL 3 · TAHINI

A tahini sauce

10 minutes | 6 portions | seeing a sauce split, then come together

Tahini is sesame paste, and it does something surprising: stir in cold water and it first seizes into a stiff lump, then loosens into a smooth, creamy sauce. Keep stirring and it comes together. It suits falafel, roast vegetables and grilled meat.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

4 tbsp	tahini
3 tbsp	lemon juice
1	small garlic clove, grated
4 tbsp	cold water, plus more if needed
1 pinch	flaked sea salt

1. Stir the tahini, lemon juice, garlic and salt together. It will go thick and pale and look as if it has curdled.
2. Add the water **one tablespoon at a time,** stirring well after each. The sauce loosens and turns smooth and creamy.
3. Add more water for a pouring sauce, taste, and adjust the lemon and salt.

> ALLERGENS
>
> **Allergens:** contains sesame. Tahini is a common allergen; check with guests before serving.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Ratio of oil to acid

Sharp and mild.

1. Make three vinaigrettes using 2, 3 and 4 parts oil to 1 part vinegar, and taste each on a leaf.

Look for: 2 to 1 is sharp, 3 to 1 is balanced and 4 to 1 is mild and rich. Choose the ratio that suits your vinegar.

EXPERIMENT

Shaken or whisked

Quick and stable.

1. Make a mustard dressing by shaking in a jar and another by slowly whisking. Leave both for 10 minutes.

Look for: The whisked dressing is thicker and holds longer. The shaken one separates sooner but is faster to make.

EXPERIMENT

With and without mustard

The emulsifier.

1. Shake two vinaigrettes in jars, one with a teaspoon of mustard and one without, and leave them to stand.

Look for: The one without mustard splits into layers within minutes. The mustard one stays cloudy and creamy far longer.

EXPERIMENT

Rescuing a split dressing

Starting again.

1. Take a dressing that has split. In a clean bowl, whisk 1 teaspoon of mustard and slowly whisk the split dressing into it.

Look for: The dressing comes back together. A new emulsifier and slow addition rebuild the droplets.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Simple vinaigrette				
Mustard dressing				
Yogurt and herb dressing				
Tahini sauce				
Ratio of oil to acid				
Shaken or whisked				
With and without mustard				
Rescuing a split dressing				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Dressing split	Oil added too fast or too much	Whisk the split dressing slowly into a spoonful of mustard in a clean bowl

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Too sharp	Too much acid	Add more oil, or a pinch of sugar or honey
Too oily or bland	Too much oil	Add more vinegar or lemon and a pinch of salt
Tahini sauce stiff and lumpy	Not enough water yet	Keep adding cold water a spoonful at a time and stirring
Soggy salad	Dressed too early	Dress at the last minute, a little at a time
Garlic too harsh	Too much raw garlic	Grate less, or soak the garlic in the lemon juice for 10 minutes first

ALLERGENS, STORING AND LEFTOVERS

Allergens: always label dressings that contain mustard, sesame or milk.

Keeping sauces: cool a sauce quickly in a shallow container within 1 to 2 hours, press cling film onto the surface to stop a skin forming, chill and use within about 2 days. Reheat until steaming hot, stirring. Milk and cream sauces can split when frozen, so freeze other sauces instead.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I know what an emulsion is.
- ☐ I can make a vinaigrette with the 3-to-1 ratio.
- ☐ I can whisk oil in slowly to make a stable dressing.
- ☐ I can use yogurt or tahini as an emulsifier.
- ☐ I can rescue a split dressing.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Sauces 1, chapter 8 is Table Sauces and Relishes: sweet, sharp and creamy sauces to serve with a meal.

Cooking Skills: Sauces 1

Chapter 8 · Table Sauces and Relishes

SKILL GOAL

Make the sweet, sharp and creamy sauces that sit on the table, and match each one to its food.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A table sauce is not made in the pan with the meat. It is made in advance and put on the table, so each person can add as much as they like. Most are built on **contrast**: a rich, fatty food needs something sharp or sweet to cut through it. That is why apple goes with pork, cranberry with poultry and cheese, mint with lamb and horseradish with beef.

Most of these sauces are easy and keep well, so make them ahead. Sugar balances sharpness, and heat softens fruit and mellows raw onion and horseradish. Taste before serving and adjust with a squeeze of lemon, a pinch of sugar or a little salt.



Figure 8. A pairing chart: match the sauce to what it cuts through.

The method

- **Pair by contrast:** rich food with sharp or sweet sauce, mild food with strong sauce.
- **Cook fruit gently** with a little water and sugar until it breaks down, stirring so it does not catch.

- **Add sugar a little at a time,** tasting as you go, because fruit varies in sweetness.
- **Let strong flavours mellow** for an hour or a day, as raw onion, vinegar and horseradish settle.
- **Store in clean jars** in the fridge and label with the date.

SAUCE	STYLE	KEEPS (FRIDGE, APPROXIMATE)	GOES WITH
Apple sauce	Sweet-sharp, cooked	5 days (freezes well)	Pork, sausages
Cranberry sauce	Sweet-tart, cooked	2 weeks	Chicken, ham, cheese
Mint sauce	Sharp, raw	3 days	Lamb, new potatoes
Horseradish cream	Hot, creamy	3 days	Roast beef, smoked fish
Onion relish	Sharp-sweet, quick pickle	1 week	Burgers, cheese, cold meat

HOT FRUIT, STRONG FLAVOURS AND ALLERGENS

Hot sugar: boiling sugar and fruit are much hotter than boiling water and stick to skin like glue. Use a deep pan, a long spoon and oven gloves, stand back when stirring, and never taste straight from the spoon until it has cooled.

Horseradish and strong vinegar: horseradish fumes sting eyes and nose, so open a window or turn on the extractor fan, and don't breathe in right over the jar. Wash your hands after grating.

Allergens: milk (cream, yogurt) and sulphites in vinegar can be allergens. Jarred horseradish may contain mustard or sulphites.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Apple sauce

25 minutes | 6 portions (about 300 ml) | cooking fruit down to a purée

Cooking apples (Bramley) collapse into a fluffy purée all by themselves. The skill is knowing when to stop adding sugar: this sauce is meant to be sharp enough to cut rich pork.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

500 g	cooking apples, peeled, cored and chopped
2 tbsp	water
1 tbsp	caster sugar, or to taste
1 tsp	lemon juice
1	small knob of butter (optional)

1. Put the apples, water and sugar in a small pan with a lid and cook over a low heat for **12 to 15 minutes,** stirring now and then, until the apple has collapsed.
2. Beat with a wooden spoon for a chunky sauce, or blend for a smooth one.
3. Add the lemon juice and the butter if using, taste, and add more sugar a little at a time. Serve warm or cold.

> **HOT FRUIT**
>
> **Hot sugar:** boiling sugar and fruit are much hotter than boiling water and stick to skin like glue. Use a deep pan, a long spoon and oven gloves, stand back when stirring, and never taste straight from the spoon until it has cooled.

LEVEL 2 · FRUIT

Cranberry sauce

20 minutes | 8 portions (about 300 ml) | setting a fruit sauce with pectin

Cranberries are full of natural pectin, which sets the sauce as it cools. They pop in the pan, which tells you when they are cooked. Make it a few days ahead.

INGREDIENTS (8 PORTIONS)

300 g	fresh or frozen cranberries
100 g	caster sugar
100 ml	orange juice
1	strip of orange zest
1	small cinnamon stick

1. Put everything in a saucepan and heat gently, stirring, until the sugar dissolves.
2. Simmer for **10 to 12 minutes** until most of the berries have popped and the sauce is glossy.
3. Remove the zest and cinnamon, taste and add sugar if it is too tart. It thickens as it cools; pour into a jar.

> **HOT SUGAR AND STORING**
>
> **Hot sugar:** boiling sugar and fruit are much hotter than boiling water and stick to skin like glue. Use a deep pan, a long spoon and oven gloves, stand back when stirring, and never taste straight from the spoon until it has cooled.
>
> **Jars and storing:** wash jars and lids in hot soapy water, rinse and dry them, then fill while the sauce is hot and cool before chilling. Keep in the fridge, label with the date and use within the time given. If a sauce smells off, looks fizzy or has mould, throw it away.

LEVEL 2 · FRESH

Mint sauce

10 minutes plus 30 minutes to stand | 6 portions | balancing sharpness and sweetness

The traditional British sauce for lamb: chopped fresh mint in sweetened vinegar. Chop the mint with a pinch of the sugar so it stays green and bruises less. Let it stand so the flavours blend.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

1	large handful of fresh mint leaves (about 20 g)
2 tsp	caster sugar
2 tbsp	boiling water
3 tbsp	malt or white wine vinegar
1 pinch	flaked sea salt

1. Chop the mint very finely with half the sugar and put it in a small bowl.
2. Add the boiling water and the remaining sugar and stir until it dissolves. Leave for 10 minutes.
3. Stir in the vinegar and salt, taste, and leave for **30 minutes** before serving. Use within about 3 days.

> **HOT WATER AND ALLERGENS**
>
> **Hot water:** boiling water scalds; pour carefully.
>
> **Allergens:** vinegar can contain sulphites.

LEVEL 3 · HOT

A horseradish cream

10 minutes | 6 portions | balancing heat with cream and acid

Horseradish gets hot and sharp, and cream tames it. Make it with jarred horseradish for ease. The heat fades in a few hours, so taste just before serving and add more if you like.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

3 tbsp	jarred horseradish, drained
150 ml	double cream
1 tsp	lemon juice
1 tsp	Dijon mustard
1 pinch	flaked sea salt
1 pinch	black pepper

1. Whip the cream until it just holds soft peaks; don't overwhip.
2. Fold in the horseradish, lemon juice and mustard.
3. Taste and add more horseradish for heat or lemon for sharpness. Chill, and use within about 3 days.

> **STRONG FLAVOURS AND ALLERGENS**
>
> **Allergens:** contains milk and mustard; horseradish in jars may contain sulphites.
>
> **Jars and storing:** wash jars and lids in hot soapy water, rinse and dry them, then fill while the sauce is hot and cool before chilling. Keep in the fridge, label with the date and use within the time given. If a sauce smells off, looks fizzy or has mould, throw it away.

LEVEL 3 · QUICK PICKLE

A quick onion relish

15 minutes plus 30 minutes to stand | 6 portions | softening raw onion in hot vinegar

Thin red onion in sweet vinegar turns bright pink and loses its harsh bite within half an hour. It lifts burgers, cheese, cold meats and curries. This is a quick pickle, so it keeps for about a week, not for months.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

2	red onions, very thinly sliced
100 ml	cider or white wine vinegar
2 tbsp	caster sugar
50 ml	water
1 pinch	flaked sea salt
1	bay leaf (optional)

1. Pack the sliced onion into a clean jar or heatproof bowl.
2. Heat the vinegar, sugar, water, salt and bay leaf in a small pan until the sugar dissolves, then pour over the onion.
3. Leave for **30 minutes** until the onion turns pink and soft, then chill. Keep in the fridge and use within about 1 week.

> HOT VINEGAR AND STORING
>
> **Hot vinegar:** hot vinegar scalds and its fumes sting the nose and eyes. Pour carefully and keep your face back.
>
> **Jars and storing:** wash jars and lids in hot soapy water, rinse and dry them, then fill while the sauce is hot and cool before chilling. Keep in the fridge, label with the date and use within the time given. If a sauce smells off, looks fizzy or has mould, throw it away.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Sugar and sharpness

Sweet, tart and balanced.

1. Make three small spoonfuls of apple sauce with no sugar, 1 teaspoon and 1 tablespoon, and taste each with a bite of pork or cheese.

Look for: No sugar is too sharp; the most sugar is like pudding. A small amount balances the sauce so it can cut rich food.

EXPERIMENT

Cooked or raw

Soft and sharp.

1. Make one onion relish with raw red onion and one with onion simmered in the vinegar for 5 minutes.

Look for: The raw version is crisp and fiery. The cooked one is soft, sweeter and milder.

EXPERIMENT

Chopped or blended

Texture.

1. Chop half the mint finely and blend half into the vinegar.

Look for: The chopped mint stays bright green with texture. The blended mint turns darker and more bitter-grassy.

EXPERIMENT

Making ahead

Fresh and rested.

1. Taste cranberry sauce on the day you make it and again two days later.

Look for: The rested sauce is smoother, sweeter and better set. Most table sauces improve after a day or two.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Apple sauce				
Cranberry sauce				
Mint sauce				
Horseradish cream				
Onion relish				
Sugar and sharpness				
Cooked or raw				
Chopped or blended				
Making ahead				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Apple sauce too watery	Too much water or wrong apple	Simmer uncovered until thick; use Bramley cooking apples
Apple sauce too sharp	Sugar not added	Stir in sugar a little at a time
Cranberry sauce too runny	Cooked too little or still warm	Chill it; it sets as it cools. Simmer a few more minutes if not
Mint sauce brown	Mint chopped and left long	Make it within a few hours, and chop with sugar
Horseradish too hot or too weak	Strength varies between brands	Add more cream to cool it, or more horseradish to heat it
Relish too sharp	Vinegar not balanced	Add a pinch more sugar and let it stand

HOT SUGAR, STORING AND LEFTOVERS

Hot sugar: boiling sugar and fruit are much hotter than boiling water and stick to skin like glue. Use a deep pan, a long spoon and oven gloves, stand back when stirring, and never taste straight from the spoon until it has cooled.

Jars and storing: wash jars and lids in hot soapy water, rinse and dry them, then fill while the sauce is hot and cool before chilling. Keep in the fridge, label with the date and use within the time given. If a sauce smells off, looks fizzy or has mould, throw it away.

Keeping sauces: cool a sauce quickly in a shallow container within 1 to 2 hours, press cling film onto the surface to stop a skin forming, chill and use within about 2 days. Reheat until steaming hot, stirring. Milk and cream sauces can split when frozen, so freeze other sauces instead.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can match a table sauce to a food.

☐ I can cook apples and cranberries into sauces.

☐ I can balance sugar and sharpness.

☐ I can make a creamy horseradish sauce.

☐ I can store sauces safely in clean jars.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Sauces 1, chapter 9 is A Sauce Plan: choosing sauces, rescuing and storing them.

Cooking Skills: Sauces 1

Chapter 9 · A Sauce Plan

SKILL GOAL

Choose a sauce for each meal, rescue one that goes wrong, and store and reheat sauces safely.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

The last skill is not a recipe but a habit: **plan, store, rescue**. Plan which sauces your week needs, make a batch of one that freezes, and know how to fix a sauce that goes wrong. A good cook is not someone whose sauces never fail; it is someone who can fix them calmly.

Which sauce to freeze matters. Tomato, vegetable, gravy and fruit sauces freeze well. Milk and cream sauces can split when frozen. Chill sauces quickly, and reheat them until steaming hot. This chapter ends the course by pulling its skills together; see Cooking Skills: Sauces 1, chapters 1 to 8 for each method.



Figure 9. A rescue map: most sauce problems have a quick fix.

The method

- **Plan the week:** pick one batch sauce and two quick sauces, and write them next to your meals.

- **Cook once, use three ways:** a batch of tomato sauce becomes pasta sauce, pizza sauce and a soup.
- **Cool fast:** pour sauce into a shallow container, chill within 1 to 2 hours, and label with the date.
- **Reheat properly:** bring to a simmer, stirring, until steaming hot all the way through.
- **Rescue first, throw away last:** most thin, thick, lumpy or split sauces can be fixed.

SAUCE TYPE	FREEZES?	FRIDGE LIFE (APPROXIMATE)	REHEAT
Tomato and vegetable	Yes, 3 months	3 to 4 days	Simmer until hot
Gravy	Yes, 3 months	2 days	Simmer, whisking
White sauce and cream sauces	Not well (can split)	2 days	Gently, with a splash of milk
Fruit sauces	Yes, 6 months	5 days or more	Warm through
Dressings	No	3 to 5 days	Serve cold; shake or whisk

COOLING, FREEZING AND REHEATING

Keeping sauces: cool a sauce quickly in a shallow container within 1 to 2 hours, press cling film onto the surface to stop a skin forming, chill and use within about 2 days. Reheat until steaming hot, stirring. Milk and cream sauces can split when frozen, so freeze other sauces instead.

Freezing sauces: freeze sauces flat in labelled bags or in tubs for up to about 3 months. Defrost in the fridge overnight, never on the worktop, and reheat until steaming hot. Freeze cream, milk and egg-based sauces with care, because they often split; whisk or blend to bring them back, or leave them out of the freezer.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A batch tomato sauce for the freezer

50 minutes | 8 portions (about 1.2 litres) | cooking one big batch to use three ways

A big pot of vegetable-packed tomato sauce that you portion and freeze. Use it as a pasta sauce, a pizza sauce (simmer it down) or a soup (add stock). The grated carrot adds sweetness and body.

INGREDIENTS (8 PORTIONS)

3 tbsp	olive oil
2	onions, finely chopped
2	carrots, grated
2	celery sticks, finely chopped
4	garlic cloves, crushed
3	400 g tins chopped tomatoes
2 tbsp	tomato purée
1 tsp	dried oregano
1 tsp	flaked sea salt

1. Cook the onion, carrot and celery in the oil over a medium-low heat for **12 minutes** until soft. Add the garlic for 1 minute.
2. Add the tomatoes, purée, oregano and salt, and simmer uncovered for **30 minutes,** stirring now and then. Blend if you like.
3. Cool, divide into portions in freezer bags or tubs, label with the date, and freeze for up to about 3 months. Defrost overnight in the fridge and reheat until steaming hot.

HOT SAUCE, BLENDING AND FREEZING

Hot sauce: a thickening sauce bubbles and spits, and hot sauce sticks to skin and burns worse than water. Stir with a long spoon, keep your face back and turn the handle of the pan inwards.

Blending hot liquids: hot liquid expands in a sealed blender and can blow the lid off and scald you. Let it cool for a few minutes, fill the jug no more than half, hold a folded cloth over the lid, and start on low. A stick blender in a deep pan avoids the problem.

> **Keeping sauces:** cool a sauce quickly in a shallow container within 1 to 2 hours, press cling film onto the surface to stop a skin forming, chill and use within about 2 days. Reheat until steaming hot, stirring. Milk and cream sauces can split when frozen, so freeze other sauces instead.

LEVEL 2 · CREAMY

A creamy pepper sauce

15 minutes plus the steak | 2 portions | a restaurant-style sauce with no alcohol

A classic steak sauce made without brandy. Crush the peppercorns coarsely and toast them in the pan to release their flavour, then use stock and mustard for depth. Pan sauces are explained in Cooking Skills: Sauces 1, chapter 6.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

1 tbsp	black peppercorns, coarsely crushed
1 tsp	butter
1	small shallot or ¼ onion, finely chopped
100 ml	low-salt beef stock
100 ml	double cream
1 tsp	Dijon mustard
1 tsp	lemon juice

1. After frying a steak and taking it out, melt the butter in the pan and cook the shallot with the peppercorns for 2 minutes.
2. Add the stock and boil for **3 minutes** until reduced by half. Add the cream and simmer for 2 minutes.
3. Take it off the heat and stir in the mustard and lemon juice. Taste and season.

> **HOT PAN AND ALLERGENS**
>
> **Hot pan and cooked-on bits:** the pan is very hot after frying and the crusty bits spit when liquid hits them. Take the pan off the heat for a moment, pour in the liquid slowly with your face back, and use a long spoon.
>
> **Allergens:** contains milk, mustard and celery in some stocks.

LEVEL 2 · SWEET AND SOUR

A sweet and sour sauce

15 minutes | 4 portions | thickening a glaze with cornflour

A bright, glossy sauce that coats chicken, prawns or vegetables. Cornflour thickens it in seconds; always mix it with cold water first so it does not clump.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

100 ml	pineapple juice
3 tbsp	rice vinegar or cider vinegar
3 tbsp	ketchup
1 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tbsp	brown sugar
1 tbsp	cornflour
3 tbsp	cold water
1	red pepper, diced (optional)

1. Put the juice, vinegar, ketchup, soy sauce, sugar and pepper in a pan and bring to a simmer.
2. Mix the cornflour with the cold water until smooth. Pour it into the pan, stirring.
3. Simmer for **1 to 2 minutes** until glossy and thick. Taste and adjust the sweetness and sharpness.

> **HOT SUGAR AND ALLERGENS**
>
> **Hot sugar:** boiling sugar and fruit are much hotter than boiling water and stick to skin like glue. Use a deep pan, a long spoon and oven gloves, stand back when stirring, and never taste straight from the spoon until it has cooled.
>
> **Allergens:** contains soy. Ketchup and soy sauce may contain gluten or celery.

LEVEL 3 · FRESH

A herb sauce (salsa verde style)

10 minutes | 4 portions | an uncooked sauce, built by chopping

An uncooked, punchy green sauce: herbs, capers, lemon and oil. It lifts grilled fish, roast chicken, potatoes and eggs, and is a fast rescue for a plain meal. Chop by hand for the best texture.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1	large handful of parsley (about 30 g)
1	small handful of basil or mint
1 tbsp	capers, rinsed
1	garlic clove, grated
1 tsp	Dijon mustard
1 tbsp	lemon juice
6 tbsp	olive oil
1 pinch	flaked sea salt

1. Chop the herbs and capers together until fine but not a paste.
2. Stir in the garlic, mustard, lemon juice and oil.
3. Taste and adjust with more lemon or salt. Use the same day, or keep in the fridge for 1 day.

> **RAW GARLIC AND ALLERGENS**
>
> **Allergens:** contains mustard; capers may contain sulphites.
>
> **Raw garlic:** use garlic in oil the same day or the next day only, and keep it chilled.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

A timed sauce session

Plan and time.

1. Choose three sauces from this course, plan the order, and make all of them in one go, noting the time.

Look for: You will find that sauces that share a pan or an ingredient can be made together. Write down which order worked.

EXPERIMENT

Swap one sauce

Change the pairing.

1. Serve your usual sauce with a different food, for example herb sauce with chicken or onion gravy over rice.

Look for: Some swaps are better than the original. Note the ones you want to repeat.

EXPERIMENT

Reheat a frozen sauce

Fresh and defrosted.

1. Defrost a portion of the batch tomato sauce in the fridge, reheat it until steaming, and taste it beside a fresh batch.

Look for: Tomato sauce usually freezes with almost no loss. It may need a splash of water, salt or a fresh herb to wake it up.

EXPERIMENT

Your signature sauce

Make your own.

1. Pick a base from the course (roux, reduction, emulsion, purée), choose a flavour you love and write the recipe as you cook it.

Look for: A signature sauce is a sauce you can make from memory, tweak by taste and be known for.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Batch tomato sauce				
Creamy pepper sauce				
Sweet and sour sauce				
Herb sauce				
A timed sauce session				
Swap one sauce				
Reheat a frozen sauce				
Your signature sauce				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Sauce too thin	Not enough thickener or reduction	Boil it down, or add cornflour mixed with cold water

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Sauce too thick	Over-reduced or too much roux	Whisk in stock, milk or water a little at a time
Lumpy	Liquid added too fast	Whisk hard, or strain through a sieve
Split or greasy	Boiled after adding butter or cream	Off the heat, whisk in a splash of cold water
Too salty	Salty stock or over-reduced	Add water, cream, a pinch of sugar or lemon juice
Frozen sauce watery	Ice crystals when defrosted	Simmer for a few minutes to thicken, stirring

COOLING, FREEZING AND LEFTOVERS

Keeping sauces: cool a sauce quickly in a shallow container within 1 to 2 hours, press cling film onto the surface to stop a skin forming, chill and use within about 2 days. Reheat until steaming hot, stirring. Milk and cream sauces can split when frozen, so freeze other sauces instead.

Freezing sauces: freeze sauces flat in labelled bags or in tubs for up to about 3 months. Defrost in the fridge overnight, never on the worktop, and reheat until steaming hot. Freeze cream, milk and egg-based sauces with care, because they often split; whisk or blend to bring them back, or leave them out of the freezer.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can plan a week of sauces.
- ☐ I can make a batch sauce and freeze it safely.
- ☐ I can reheat a sauce until steaming hot.
- ☐ I can rescue a thin, thick, lumpy or split sauce.
- ☐ I have my own signature sauce.

NEXT CHAPTER

Congratulations: you have finished Cooking Skills: Sauces 1. Soups and Stocks 1 will cover making your own stock, the base of many sauces, and Cooking Skills: Eggs 2, chapters 7 and 8 cover mayonnaise and hollandaise.