



AS FOOD STUDIO / SHUTTERSTOCK

Sauce is boss

How to spice up your kitchen repertoire

BY KATE PARHAM KORDSMEIER

HAVING A FEW sauces in your repertoire is a must for any home chef. Whether you opt for one of the five French mother sauces (béchamel, velouté, espagnole, tomato and hollandaise) or a delicious herb-based sauce (e.g., pesto or chimichurri), sauces can transform any dish from good to out of this world.

“I’m a big fan of fully understanding a sauce, being able to execute it confidently and then having some fun with it,” says Susan Volland, author of *Mastering Sauces* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2015; not available at Costco), who likes adapting a basic tomato sauce to make sauces from different regions, like African peanut sauce or Mexican mole.

A well-balanced vinaigrette is another expert favorite. “Vinaigrettes can be used on so many dishes, not just on salads,” says Martha Holmberg, author of *Modern Sauces* (Chronicle Books, 2012; not available at Costco). “Use [them] on cooked vegetables, boiled potatoes, lentils or beans, grains, grilled fish and meats, even on desserts. I love to make fruit salads and dress them with a slightly sweeter vinaigrette.”

Here are a few basic sauce rules.

Balancing flavors

When it comes to making sauces, “you want clean, clear flavors and a delicious tension between the key tastes: salty, spicy, sweet, meaty, bitter, bright,” says Holmberg. “Be sure they are highly flavorful, as you’ll only use a small amount on other, less punchy food.”

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John Whalen III, author of *Rubs: Over 100 Recipes for the Perfect Sauces, Marinades and Seasonings* (Cider Mill Press, 2016; not available at Costco), advises, “Consider the strength of the flavors you’re dealing with—you don’t want five powerful flavors all jostling for attention; rather you want to have one flavor that’s center stage, followed by several backup flavors that complement.”

The key is to taste as you go, adjusting the seasoning as needed. Likewise, “every sauce needs enough acid to provide vibrant flavor and the energy to bring life to a dish, so I often adjust my sauce at the end with a bit of lemon juice, sherry vinegar or grated citrus zest,” says Holmberg.

Choosing oils

Most sauces work best with extra-virgin olive oil, says Holmberg: “I want good flavor, but nothing too assertive, which would overpower other ingredients.” Nut oils, such as toasted walnut or hazelnut, are better in vinaigrettes and pestos. Consider the origins of the recipe you’ll use the sauce in, suggests Volland, who uses coconut oil in south Indian sauces and peanut oil for stir-frying.

Pairing sauces

With foods and sauces, some people prefer complementary pairings, while others favor contrast. Holmberg, who is among the latter, recommends sharper sauces like vinaigrettes and acidic herb sauces like salsa verde

on rich, fatty meats. “But all rules have exceptions, so a bland pasta also loves a mild, creamy cheese sauce,” she says.

For most meats, Whalen recommends an olive oil-based marinade with garlic and herbs, or marinating red meat in red wine, and poultry and fish in white wine and butter.

Storage

Most sauces can be made up to a week in advance, but experts agree that fresh is best. Many especially recommend making herb-based sauces fresh; herb sauces can be frozen, but it may lessen their flavor and color. However, tomato, chocolate, caramel and fruit sauces do great in the freezer, says Holmberg.

On the other hand, “a spontaneous pan sauce or butter-enriched sauce shouldn’t be held for more than a few minutes,” cautions Volland. “Conversely, homemade chili oil can potentially last six months at room temperature.”

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THE COSTCO CONNECTION

Costco members will find many ingredients they need to make fabulous sauces at Costco. Many ready-made sauces are also available in the warehouses.

◀ WHITE SAUCE DONE RIGHT (BÉCHAMEL)

2 cups whole milk

Infusing ingredients (choose 1 to 3), such as a bit of onion or shallot, 4 or 5 black peppercorns, a bay leaf, 1 or 2 parsley stems, a slice of carrot, garlic clove and/or a mushroom stem

2 tablespoons butter

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

½ teaspoon kosher salt, or to taste

Very finely ground black pepper (optional)

A few gratings of fresh nutmeg (optional)

Combine the milk and your choice of infusing ingredients in a medium saucepan and heat over medium-high heat until the milk begins to steam and small bubbles form at the edges of the pan. Remove the pan from the heat and set the milk aside to infuse. (If you prefer, you can infuse the milk by combining the ingredients in a microwave-safe container and microwaving on high for about 45 seconds.)

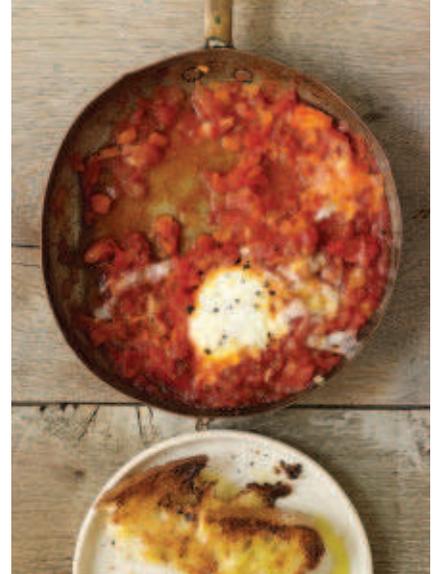
Heat a medium saucepan over medium-high heat and

add the butter. When it bubbles, remove the pan from the heat and sprinkle the flour evenly over the melted butter. Stir until the butter and flour are a smooth paste (roux). Return the pan to the heat and cook the roux, stirring often, until the raw aroma is cooked out and it is bubbly but not brown, about 1 minute.

Strain half of the infused milk into the roux and whisk vigorously until it is smooth. Add the remaining (strained) milk, and stir well. Bring the sauce to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer, season with the salt and simmer, stirring often, for 8 to 10 minutes to make sure there is no raw flour taste and to give the starch particles a chance to swell and thicken the sauce.

Season with additional salt to taste if desired, and add the pepper and nutmeg if using. Makes 1½ cups.

Adapted from Mastering Sauces, by Susan Volland.



ELLEN SILVERMAN

BOLD AND SPICY TOMATO SAUCE ▶

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

10 olive oil-packed anchovy fillets, drained

1 teaspoon lightly packed, finely minced Calabrian chili or other hot pepper in oil

6 cups marinara sauce

1½ cups chopped, pitted Kalamata olives

¼ cup coarsely chopped, drained capers

½ cup coarsely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

½ teaspoon lightly packed, finely grated lemon zest

Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

In a large, wide, heavy saucepan or a Dutch oven, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the anchovies and chilis, and cook, stirring once or twice, until slightly sizzling, about 30 seconds. Add the marinara sauce, olives and capers, and cook, stirring often, until sauce is heated through and the flavors have blended, about 10 minutes. Stir in the parsley and lemon zest. Taste and adjust the seasoning with salt and/or pepper (you probably won't need either). Serve the sauce with pasta; spoon some sauce into a baking dish, nestle cod or halibut fillets in it and bake; or serve with grilled toast and poached egg (pictured).

Makes about 7 cups.

Adapted from Modern Sauces, by Martha Holmberg.

OLIVE TAPENADE

1 cup Nicoise olives, pitted and chopped

½ cup olive oil

½ small shallot, minced

1 garlic clove, minced

1 rosemary sprig, leaves removed and finely minced

1 anchovy fillet (optional)

1 tablespoon fresh basil, finely chopped

1 tablespoon fresh flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped

1 tablespoon capers, minced

1 tablespoon fresh thyme

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

Combine the tapenade ingredients in a medium bowl and mix thoroughly. Serve with steak. Makes 2 cups.

Adapted from Rubs: Over 100 Recipes for the Perfect Sauces, Marinades and Seasonings, by John Whalen.

KATE'S SALSA VERDE

6 tomatillos, husks removed, quartered

2 jalapeños, seeded (if you like it less spicy, just use 1 jalapeño)

1 bunch cilantro, trimmed

½ white onion, in large dice

3 garlic cloves

Juice of 1 lime

1 teaspoon cumin

1 teaspoon coriander

1 teaspoon chili powder

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

½ teaspoon kosher salt

1 teaspoon black pepper

Place all ingredients in a food processor and pulse until smooth and combined. Serve with enchiladas and tacos, over grilled meats and veggies, in pizza in place of marinara or accompanying tortilla chips. Makes about 2 cups.

Note: If the salsa is too thick, add 2 tablespoons water at a time and pulse until the salsa reaches the desired consistency. It should be slightly chunky and slightly watery, but not souplike.

Courtesy of Kate Parham Kordsmeier.



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HEIDI GELDAUSER

1:3 VINAIGRETTE

1 tablespoon finely minced shallot

1 small garlic clove, finely minced or pressed (optional)

½ teaspoon kosher salt, or to taste

½ teaspoon Dijon mustard or ¼ teaspoon dry mustard (optional)

Freshly ground black pepper

¼ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice or vinegar, such as red wine vinegar

¾ cup oil, such as olive or grapeseed

Stir together the shallot, garlic if using, salt, mustard if using and plenty of pepper in a small bowl. Add the lemon juice and whisk to mix. Continue to whisk the base while gradually adding the oil in a thin stream until emulsified. Taste for seasoning and adjust it to suit your dish.

If the vinaigrette separates, whisk or blend it again before serving. Makes 1 cup.

Adapted from Mastering Sauces, by Susan Volland.