

Old Fashioned Bread Sauce



Ingredients

- 1 small onion
 - 1 bay leaf
 - 4 whole cloves
 - 1 blade of mace (optional)
 - 6 whole peppercorns
 - strip of lemon peel (pith removed)
 - pinch cayenne pepper (optional)
 - 500ml (2 cups) milk
 - 90g (1 1/2 cups) breadcrumbs (made from 2-day-old bread, crusts removed)
 - 60ml (1/4 cup) pouring cream
 - pinch of ground white pepper
- good pinch of ground nutmeg

Note

A precursor to white bechamel-style sauces, bread sauce was a traditional accompaniment to roast chicken. It is also lovely with hot corned beef or poached pink-fleshed fish. For these options, add 1 tablespoon of horseradish cream to give the sauce extra pep. Makes 600 ml

Directions

Peel the onion, leaving it whole, but trim and discard the roots from the base. Wipe or rinse the onion clean. Attach the bay leaf to the onion using the cloves as 'nails'.

Put the onion in a saucepan with the mace, if using, peppercorns, lemon peel and cayenne pepper, if using. Add the milk and warm over low heat, stirring occasionally. Simmer gently for 20 minutes, partially covered with a lid, then remove from the heat and allow the flavours to infuse for around 30 minutes. Strain the sauce through a sieve, discarding the solids and any skin that has formed.

Return the milk to the pan and reheat over low heat. Add the breadcrumbs and stir for 5 minutes or until the breadcrumbs are saturated and a thick sauce can be formed by smoothing the crumbs with the back of a spoon. Add the cream, white pepper, nutmeg and a pinch of salt. Cook for another 5 minutes, stirring so that it does not stick to the base of the pan.

Cook's tips: For a lighter sauce, make as directed but substitute 1/2 cup milk with chicken stock.

If the sauce is too thick for your liking, add a little chicken stock towards the final stage of cooking.

