

GUASTELLO'S VILLAGE MARKET

Cheese Soufflé

Serves 2 as a main dish or 4 as a starter

Ingredients

4 large eggs (3 whole eggs + one egg white)
1/2 cup grated Comté, Gruyère, or Parmesan cheese, or blend of all three
6 tablespoons flour
3 1/2 tablespoons butter
1 1/2 cup milk
Salt, pepper, nutmeg, cayenne or Piment d'Espelette to taste
Unsalted butter, for the soufflé mold
Extra Parmesan cheese, for the soufflé mold

Prepare the baking dish and heat the oven: Butter your oven-safe bowl or soufflé dish and sprinkle lightly with a little extra Parmesan cheese. Set aside. Move an oven rack to the bottom of the oven and turn your oven on to the broil setting.

Separate the eggs: Separate the eggs into white and yolks. Put the whites in the bowl of a stand mixer, or in a large clean bowl. Discard one yolk (you can refrigerate it for later use). Set the eggs aside.
Grate the cheese: Grate all the cheese into a bowl and set aside.

Make a béchamel sauce: Use the flour, butter, and milk to make a béchamel sauce (white sauce). Melt the butter in a 2-quart saucepan then whisk in the flour and cook for several minutes, until it is thick and slightly toasted (don't let the color darken past a pale golden color, though). Whisk in the milk and cook, whisking constantly, until it thickens. Remove from the heat.

Cool the béchamel: Scrape the béchamel into a large bowl. Let it cool just slightly, so that it's warm to the touch.

Add the egg yolks: Stir the egg yolks into the béchamel.

Add the cheese and seasonings: Stir the grated cheese in with the béchamel and egg yolks. Taste and add salt, pepper, and nutmeg or cayenne to taste.

Beat the egg whites until stiff: In a stand mixer, or using a handheld beater, beat the egg whites until they are quite stiff, but not dry. If you tip the bowl, they shouldn't all slide out in one mass — they should stand up stiffly if pull the whisk straight up from the bowl.

Lighten the batter: Fold a spoonful of stiff egg whites into the batter, incorporating them thoroughly. The batter should lighten by one shade.

Fold in the rest of the egg whites: Now fold the rest of the egg whites into the batter. Spread them through the batter using a stiff spatula, running the spatula straight down the bottom of the bowl, then flipping the batter over. The egg whites should be all mixed in, but there ought to be some lumps of stiff

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egg white still visible. Obviously this is the most delicate part of the procedure; any small variations in stiffness of egg whites or how they are incorporated into the batter will affect the final outcome. But don't worry too much about it; the soufflé will be delicious even if it doesn't rise as high as you would like it to! (See a short video of this step here.)

Pour the batter into the baking dish: Scrape the batter into the prepared mold. The batter should fill the mold about halfway.

Broil for 3 minutes, then bake for 20 minutes: Place in the oven on the bottom rack and broil for 3 minutes. Without opening the oven door turn the heat down to 400°F and continue baking for 20 minutes or until a tester comes out clean. If the top is browning too quickly, place an empty baking sheet on the top rack of the oven to help shield the top.

Eat immediately: While the soufflé is baking, make sure the table is set and your guests are ready! As soon as the soufflé is out of the oven, serve and enjoy! And remember: no matter what your soufflé looks like, and how much it rises, it will be cheesy and delicious. It's not all about the puff.

Cook's Notes:

Substitute Soufflé Pans: If you don't have a real soufflé pan, you can use any straight-sided pan that's deeper than it is wide. They'll bake more evenly and with better lift if you use a round pan instead of a square or rectangular one. You could use any baking dish or even a deep, oven-safe saucepan!

Alternatively, you could divide the batter and make mini-soufflés in ramekins.

Make sure to wipe up any drips on the inside of the soufflé dish as you pour in the batter. They'll hold the soufflé back from rising properly as they harden in the oven.

You can add heft to your soufflé by adding any extra ingredients into the béchamel and egg yolk base before folding in the egg whites, like shredded chicken, ground beef, sautéed vegetables, or wilted greens. These extra ingredients will inhibit the puff, but the soufflé will still be delicious. Also, any other ingredients, such as meat, seafood, or mushrooms, should be cooked before adding to a soufflé.

Credit: thekitchn.com