

**CROQUE MONSIEUR** "croak mess-yur"

4 servings

*A little taste of Paris right at our own tables! Steve and L.J. ordered this specialty all over France the last time we were there. It is one of our favorite French dishes, and my rendition tastes exactly like the ones we ate. It's the Gruyère cheese that makes all the difference. It's the same cheese that tops French onion soup, and it melts so beautifully.*

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 3/4 cup milk
- Pinch each salt, pepper, and nutmeg
- 8 slices French, Italian, or sourdough French bread, about 1/2 inch thick
- 4 (1/8 inch-thick) slices deli ham
- 8 to 10 ounces Gruyère cheese, shredded (2 to 2½ cups) divided
- Softened butter, for buttering the bread

1. Melt the butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add the flour and cook and stir until bubbly. Add the milk all at once and cook, stirring constantly, until the sauce thickens. Add the salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Remove from the heat.
2. Place 4 bread slices on a baking sheet. Top each with a slice of ham and about 1/4 cup Gruyère. Top with the remaining bread.
3. Preheat the broiler to low broil and adjust a rack to 6 inches from the heat. Butter the sandwiches on both sides (outsides). Place them under the broiler until deep golden brown, about 2 minutes per side. Watch closely to prevent burning.
4. Spoon one-fourth of the sauce (about 3 tablespoons) over each sandwich. Top each one with 1/4 cup of the remaining cheese. Broil until the cheese begins to brown, about 2 minutes.



Serve the sandwiches with a green salad or fruit platter.

**Variation: Croque Madame**

Fry an egg over-easy in a small skillet and place the fried egg on top of the sandwich as soon as it comes out of the oven. This is how I see most French people eat this sandwich.