

Learn The Basics To Create A Not-So-Basic Brunch Dish

I firmly believe that in order to master any subject, you must first learn the basics. This is certainly true for cooking. Learn a few fundamentals and from there you can create all sorts of amazing concoctions and become a home chef extraordinaire.

What I love about this recipe is that it is comprised of a couple of basics—poached eggs and white sauce. The white sauce has been jazzed up and transformed with a bit of tomato paste which turns it into a completely different sauce.

I believe that poached eggs are one of life's most simple and sublime pleasures—there is just something about a perfectly set white surrounding a luscious runny yolk that just makes me swoon.

Here's a couple tips for perfectly poached eggs:

- Start with the best eggs you can get—cage-free pastured eggs are not only better for you but will give you the best poached egg.
- Use a wide deep skillet or Dutch oven to make your poached eggs; too shallow of a pan can give you trouble.
- Add a splash of white distilled vinegar to your water to help the white of the egg from separating too much.
- Crack the eggs into a small



SIMPLY GLUTEN FREE

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ramekin or bowl and then slide the egg into the simmering water.

- Remove the poached egg from the simmering water with a slotted spoon and transfer it to a plate lined with paper towels. You can trim the edges with a knife if you want really perfect looking eggs—shhh, this will be our little secret.

- Believe it or not, poached eggs can be made ahead of time. Simply undercook the eggs by about 30 seconds, slide them into a bowl of cold water and keep in the fridge. Just before serving, slip the eggs into simmering water to heat for about 30 seconds.

White sauce is such a basic recipe to learn, it can be the basis for so many other things such as cheese dip, spinach gratin, gravy—the list goes on and on. It is not hard to make, so versatile and so quick; there is just no good reason not to master this basic recipe.

Let's put these basic recipes together, throw in some artichokes and ham, and create a lovely dish perfect for a springtime brunch. This recipe serves 2 but can easily be doubled or tripled.

Gluten-Free Artichoke, Ham and Egg Gratin

Serves 2

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 tablespoon gluten-free flour or sweet rice flour
- 1 cup cold milk
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 4 artichoke heart bottoms
- 2 very thin slices ham
- 4 poached eggs
- 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese

Melt the butter in a heavy skillet

over medium heat. Add the flour and whisk until all lumps are gone. Cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the milk all at once and whisk well, ensuring there are no lumps. Switch to a spoon and cook, stirring constantly, until the sauce thickens. Whisk in the salt and tomato paste. Cook for another minute.

Preheat the broiler to high.

Place the artichoke heart bottoms in a baking dish. Cut the ham into strips and place a quarter of the ham in each artichoke heart bottom. Top with a poached egg. Spoon the sauce over the eggs, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and broil for 2 to 3 minutes. Serve immediately.

Carol Kicinski is a chef and the editor of www.simplygluten-free.com.



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