

Eggs Benedict, Dean Small and Daniel Bendas,
Synergy, California and Texas. RECIPE, p. 115.



HAPPY hollandaise

A few additional flavors and textures take classic eggs Benedict from staid to stupendous

By Daniel Bendas and Dean Small

the original

Two myths compete as to the origin of this breakfast/brunch classic: One credits a Wall Street banker named LeGrand Benedict and his wife, who were regulars at Manhattan's ritzy Delmonico's during the 1920s. Benedict, or more specifically Mrs. Benedict, apparently complained that she was bored with the menu. The

now famous dish was concocted to appease her. Some accounts say that the original base might have been toast, not the now-familiar English muffin.

Another version of the story puts Wall Street broker Lemeul Benedict at the center of it all, albeit earlier (1894) and slightly uptown at the Waldorf Astoria hotel. This story contends that Benedict would order an elixir of toast,

bacon, poached eggs, and a "hooker" (pitcher) of hollandaise as a hangover cure. Chef Oscar Tschirky then added it to the regular menu.

the analysis

Scores of variations already exist on this classic, from *oeufs a la Bénédictine* (poached eggs on a bed of puréed salt

cod and potatoes, topped with hollandaise sauce) to eggs Hussard (poached eggs and marchands de vin over Canadian bacon or ham on a split English muffin).

Clearly this is a dish about indulgence. So the challenge becomes how to take an already extravagant dish over the top and offer an interpretation that is lively and contemporary.

Classic eggs Benedict really breaks down into four main components: a crust, eggs, another protein and a sauce. By (literally) scrambling these components and layering on a few additional flavors and textures, it's easy to take eggs Benedict from staid to stupendous.

the results

In our first reinterpretation, eggs Oscar, crab cakes do double duty as both the base and the protein. Although certainly not low-fat, this version is ideal for anyone still looking to enhance the menu with low-carb options. The charred lemon and dill hollandaise perfectly complements the crab, and a spike of pepper sauce adds a final boost of flavor.

Our second version, eggs Marseille, swaps Parmesan pastry shells for the muffins, applewood-smoked bacon for the traditional Canadian, then adds a hearty mushroom Florentine filling and a rich, smoky Gouda Mornay sauce. ❖

❖ **Substituting crab cakes for the traditional English muffin allows operators to elevate the dish to a higher price point and also adds an item to the menu that can be billed as “low-carb.”**

Eggs Oscar

Dean Small and Daniel Bendas, Synergy, California and Texas

Yield: 1 serving

Menu price: \$10.49; food cost/serving: 28% to 29%

Crab cake, 4-Oz, prepared, halved width-wise	1 each
Asparagus spears, char-grilled	6 each
Poached eggs	2 each
Charred lemon and dill hollandaise sauce ▼	2 Oz
Charred lemon crown ▼	1/2 each
Kale leaf	1 each
Cherry tomatoes, halved	2 each

Heat the prepared crab cake. Place the asparagus on top of the crab cake. Place 1 poached egg on top of each crab cake. Top each egg with 1 ounce of charred dill hollandaise sauce. Garnish plate with charred lemon crown, kale and cherry tomatoes.

CHARRED LEMON AND DILL HOLLANDAISE SAUCE

Yield: 1 qt

Egg yolks, large	12 each
Clarified sweet butter	36 Oz
Lemon juice, freshly squeezed	3/4 C

White pepper, ground	1/2 tsp
Salt	3/4 tsp
Hot red pepper sauce	3/4 tsp
Fresh dill, chopped	1/4 C
Charred lemon zest, minced	1/4 C

In the top of double boiler or a heat-proof bowl, whisk the egg yolks until they become thick and leave ribbons in the bottom of the bowl. (When the yolk mixture has thickened enough, you can see the bottom of the pan between strokes and mixture forms a light cream on the wires of the whip.) Place the pan or bowl over a saucepan of simmering, not boiling, water. Slowly whisk in the warm butter and lemon juice. Add the white pepper, salt and hot red pepper sauce and thoroughly blend. Add the fresh chopped dill and minced charred lemon zest and mix well. Hold sauce in a warm area.

CHARRED LEMON

Yield: 1/4 C

Lemons, halved	3 each
Vegetable oil	as needed

Toss lemon halves in vegetable oil to thoroughly coat. Place on char-broiler and char the lemon on as many sides as possible without burning. Reserve to cool. Using a vegetable peeler, zest the lemons being careful not to include the lemon pith. Mince the lemon zest and hold until needed.

Chefs Daniel Bendas and Dean Small are both principals in Synergy, a foodservice menu and operations consulting firm based in California and Texas.

* Grilling the asparagus spears adds smoky flavor, as well as texture and visual appeal from the grill marks.

* The smoky flavors of grilled asparagus complement the char-grilled lemon zest in the hollandaise sauce.



* Frying/grilling gives this dish a satisfying, crispy texture.

* Crab cakes and asparagus cue customers that this is classic veal Oscar, reinterpreted for breakfast/brunch.

* Lemon-dill hollandaise is layered with flavor first from the lemon juice, second from the charred lemon zest and third from the fresh dill.

Eggs Marseille

Dean Small and Daniel Bendas,
Synergy, California and Texas

Yield: 1 serving

Menu price: \$8.99;
food cost/serving: 28% to 29%

Parmesan pastry shells, prepared (see note)	2 each
Mushroom Florentine filling ▼	4 Oz
Applewood smoked bacon, 3/8-inch dice	1 Oz
Eggs, lightly whisked	3 each
Scallions, 1/8-inch slices	1 TBS
Smoked Gouda Mornay sauce ▼	2 Oz
Harissa or red pepper sauce	1 TBS
Flat-leaf parsley sprig	1 each
Cherry tomato, halved	1 each

1. Warm the pastry shells as needed. Carefully remove the top or lid of each shell and reserve until needed. Place two ounces of the warm mushroom filling into each shell.

2. Place the diced bacon in a sauté pan. Add the eggs and scallions. Gently scramble, being careful not to overcook the eggs.

3. Divide the scrambled egg mixture evenly between the pastry shells. Ladle 1 ounce of Mornay sauce over each shell. Place the pastry lid on top of the egg. Garnish plate with drops of harissa or red pepper sauce, parsley sprig and cherry tomato; serve.

Note: For the Parmesan pastry shells, cut 4-inch circles from frozen, thawed puff pastry dough. Egg-wash the circles and place them on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Cut slightly smaller circles from the dough and place 1 on top of each 4-inch circle.



Brush again with egg wash. Sprinkle with grated Parmesan cheese and bake at 400 degrees F until golden brown.

MUSHROOM FLORENTINE FILLING

Yield: 24 Oz

Butter	1/4 C
Yellow onions, 1/4-inch dice	4 Oz
White mushrooms, sliced	6 Oz
Shiitake mushrooms, sliced	4 Oz
Sherry wine	1 Oz
Sausage link, 1/2-inch dice	8 Oz
Salt	1/2 tsp
Freshly ground black pepper	1/4 tsp
Cayenne	1/4 tsp
Spinach leaves	12 Oz

1. Over moderate heat in a medium-sized saucepan, melt butter. Add onions and sauté until tender. Add the sliced mushrooms and sauté until tender. Add the sherry wine and sauté for 1 additional minute.

2. Add the diced sausage links, stir well to fully incorporate. Add the seasonings and blend well. Add the fresh spinach and gently sauté to wilt. Mix well to thoroughly incorporate into the mix. Remove from heat and reserve.

SMOKED GOUDA MORNAY SAUCE

Yield: 1 qt

Butter	1/4 C
Flour	3 TBS
Milk, whole	2 1/4 C
White pepper	1/8 tsp
Hot red pepper sauce	1/4 tsp
Salt	1/2 tsp
Smoked Gouda cheese, grated	10 Oz

Melt butter in heavy medium saucepan over medium heat. Add flour and whisk until mixture is smooth, about 1 minute. Whisk in milk, white pepper, hot red pepper sauce and salt. Whisk until mixture thickens slightly, about 2 minutes. Gradually whisk in cheese. Stir until mixture is smooth and begins to bubble, stirring constantly, about 5 minutes. Cover and reserve, warm.

✿ Parmesan puff pastry shells are a convenient, yet dramatic and flavorful alternative to traditional English muffins.



* Mushroom Florentine filling gets intense flavor from two kinds of mushrooms, sherry, sausage and red and black peppers.

* Diced, applewood-smoked bacon packs an unexpected punch—a welcome change from plain Canadian bacon. Consider slicing bacon in julienne strips for a more demure presentation.



* Dabs of harissa or red pepper sauce reinforce both the subtle heat in the cheese and the dish's Mediterranean theme.

* Smoked Gouda Mornay sauce is a rich multi-layered stand-in for hollandaise that plays well off the smoked flavors of the bacon and capitalizes on the growing popularity of cheese sauces (see “The Melting Point,” pg. 24).