

Keep Your Dinner Guests Guessing with a Soft-Boiled Mystery



Illustration: Robert Hansen

Forget themed dinner parties. Wow your friends with a chemically goosed false egg. “I love the element of surprise,” says [chef Alexander Talbot](#), who created the recipe. “It looks just like a poached egg.” The key is Methocel A4C and Methocel F50 — available online — which turn purees (here, cauliflower and hollandaise) into tasty gels that keep your guests guessing.

[1] White: Puree 500 grams of cooked cauliflower. While it’s still hot, stir in 5 grams of Methocel A4C. Refrigerate until cold.

[2] Yolk: Prepare 400 grams of hollandaise sauce. Heat 100 grams of water to a simmer. Stir in 5 grams of Methocel F50, then blend the mixture into the sauce. Refrigerate in a squeeze bottle until cold.

[3] Stretch plastic wrap over a small teacup and coat with a layer of white.

[4] Squirt on a dollop of yolk.

[5] Gently add another layer of white.

[6] Gather the plastic wrap into a “purse” and tie with twine.

[7] Drop into simmering water for about five minutes or until the packet feels firm. Snip off the plastic wrap to reveal a quivering surprise.

False Egg Recipes

Brown Butter Hollandaise Sauce

220g/8oz butter
35g/1.25 oz lemon juice
20g/0.7oz lime pickle
4g salt
104g/3.65oz/2 whole eggs
18g/0.63oz/1 egg yolk

Melt the butter in a small sauté pan and cook until the milk solids have turned golden brown. Remove the butter from the heat immediately and let cool slightly. Combine the remaining ingredients in a blender and puree. While the blender is running, slowly drizzle the hot brown butter into the mixture, creating a rich and creamy hollandaise sauce. It will be well seasoned because we will be diluting it by 25 percent to create the reheatable hollandaise.

Reheatable Hollandaise Sauce

370g/13oz hollandaise sauce
92.5g/3.25oz water
4.62g/0.16oz Methocel F50 (1 percent of the total weight of hollandaise and the water)

While the hollandaise sauce is still warm, bring the water to a boil. Sprinkle the Methocel over the water and whisk it into the water. When the Methocel is dispersed, turn the blender on low and slowly drizzle the water into the hollandaise sauce. Increase the speed of the blender and shear the mixture into the hollandaise sauce until it is fully incorporated and looks well blended with a slight sheen. Once the Methocel is fully dispersed, place the mixture in a bowl over an ice bath to chill. It should be chilled to 10°C/50°F and then rest in refrigeration for at least 20 minutes before using. The sauce will keep for up to two days in refrigeration.

Cauliflower Puree

420g/14.8oz cauliflower
225g/8oz milk
50g/1.75oz cream cheese
4g/0.14oz/2/3t salt
0.75% Methocel A4C

Cut the cauliflower into small pieces so that it can cook quickly. Combine the cauliflower, milk, and cream cheese in a pot and simmer until the cauliflower is soft and tender. When the cauliflower is tender put the entire mixture into a blender. Puree the mixture in a blender. Weigh the mixture in the blender (it helps to know what your blender top weighs so calculations may be made from the blender).

Weigh the hot puree and calculate 0.75 percent of the total weight. Weigh out that amount of Methocel A4C and shear it into the puree using a blender. In this recipe we end up with 450g/15.85oz of cauliflower puree and the amount of Methocel we calculated is 3.375g/0.12oz. Turn the blender onto low and increase the speed until a vortex forms in the puree. Sprinkle the Methocel into the vortex to evenly disperse it into the cauliflower puree. Be sure to puree it until the Methocel is completely dispersed and the mixture looks well blended with a slight

sheen. Cool mixture to below 10°C/50°F. Let it rest in refrigeration for at least 20 minutes before using.

False Egg

Reheatable hollandaise sauce

Cauliflower puree

Cut eight squares of plastic wrap 15.25cm/6in square. Place a spoonful of cauliflower puree into the center of each piece of plastic wrap. Spread the mixture into a circle on the plastic so that it reaches to two-thirds of the edges and is 7.5mm/0.3in thick. Place a spoonful of hollandaise sauce the size of an egg yolk in the center of the cauliflower puree. Pull the edges of the plastic wrap up together pulling the cauliflower puree around the hollandaise sauce. Twist the plastic wrap so that the cauliflower encompasses the hollandaise sauce and the parcel looks like a beggars purse. Use a piece of twine to tie the plastic in place keeping the parcels shape secure. Place the tied false eggs in the freezer until ready to serve.

To heat, drop the false eggs into a water bath or a pot of water warmed to 52°C/125°F. Let the eggs cook for 10 minutes until the Methocel gels and they are heated through. The cauliflower will set and resemble the texture of an egg white while the hollandaise sauce will thicken and still be fluid.

