



The IncrEDIBLE Discourse Show Planning Guide

Hello chefs, today we talk mastering sauces in the kitchen. Why that's important and what it looks like in a home and professional setting. I am Mark Grigsby, your chef and guide through this experience, and this.. Is the IncrEDIBLE Discourse.

How exciting! Episode 15! What a great start to the world's best culinary podcast. It's hard to believe that the first season is half over and that we started in November. We have grown fast and now I feel like we're finally getting the hang of it.

If you haven't checked out the youtube page and the daily shorts, you really should. They have been coming along very well and have been really well received. While you're there make sure you hit the like and subscribe button so you never miss a short or podcast release.

Have you guys checked out the website and signed up for the monthly newsletter? The website is generating a lot of traffic and has a ton of great information on it. So if you're trying to elevate your cooking game, this is going to be a hub for all of your teachings.

Today we're going to talk about saucework, what that is and what it looks like. So let's get started with what a sauce is. I know that sounds dubious, but I think it's best that we start from the beginning and lay the ground and foundation.

A sauce, by definition, is any flavorful liquid meant to enhance, balance or unify a dish. It adds texture, contrast, richness, acidity, or brightness.

And that's important. A sauce can elevate a good dish to un-fucking-belivable. It brings depth, cohesion and flair... even to the simplest ingredients. Have you ever had a meal where the sauce was truly unforgettable? Like a BBQ sauce on ribs? Or a beurre blanc on a fish? Or what about something truly simple like the soy sauce for your nigiri? Everyone has had that 1 or 2 unforgettable experiences where the sauce blew you away and every time you thought about that meal, you could still taste it. The flavor, the texture, the smell.. All of it.

I remember the first time I had that experience. As a kid I was always surrounded by great cooks. Both of my grandmothers and my mom were awesome cooks when I was younger. I had some of the best meals in my life from these 3 women. But I didn't understand it. It was just something that we did.. We ate and we ate well. And I had a little bit of the east and a little bit of the west in my family. When I would see my grandmother on my moms side, she would make these pretty memorable japanese or asian dishes that stuck with me and my grandmother on

my dad's side I got the best of country cooking. My mom is actually the single best home cook that I know. She has influence from all over the world and has a better palette than some professional chefs and cooks that I know. But my first experience, it didn't come from any of them.

I was younger and working in my first fine dining restaurant. I was just getting into food, but was completely unaware of the world there was of it. To me, food was just that. There was no emphasis on texture, flavor or even cultural influence on any kind of level outside what I knew. I never thought about it at that point in my life. I needed a job and a friend of a friend knew a place that was hiring and sent me down there. After I started, I was the "new guy" on the line and was very green. Didn't know who what when where or why or the who's who of the business. I had one thing and one thing only on my mind, and that was money. I got picked on by the other cooks because they could all speak the language and the jargon and I was just the guy from homestead Florida looking to work. I didn't have the passion or know how that these guys did so I was kinda the black sheep of the group. I was very quiet and kept to myself.. Primarily because no one would talk to me or give me the time of day. Long story short, I was finishing my set up on the line and the sous chef was walking by me and had a sizzle platter in his hand with a few fingerling potatoes cut up and some brown sauce covering them, eating them. He walked over and offered me a bite. I hadn't eaten that day and was starving, but in this kitchen we didn't eat, we worked so I was starving. But I remember that one bite that I had. It was simple.. Blanched and fried fingerling potatoes with demi glace. It was one of the best things I had ever tasted. It was rich and stuck to your palette and coated your mouth. It was evenly balanced with salt and the sweetness of the red wine used to make it. It stopped me dead in my tracks, it was truly unbelievable. It was so good that I turned around and followed this guy to ask him what it was. He told me it was demi glace and asked if I liked it. I raved about it like a schoolgirl about her first crush.

Years later, after I decided that this was the career that I wanted to pursue... I learned how to make this sauce and chased that experience every single time I made it. Today, it still is my favorite sauce. It takes hours and hours to make it, but you can taste every single minute of it when it's done correctly.

So when we say that a sauce can elevate a "good dish to unforgettable" this is exactly what we mean. It burns a memory in your head that lasts a lifetime.

Now the historical roots of sauce work goes back hundreds of years, but the framework of it all started with Escoffier's 5 mother sauces. He restructured and modernized French cuisine, including these sauces in his landmark work *Le Guide Culinaire* in 1903. These base sauces became the foundation of classical western cooking. And if you didn't listen to the podcast about the mother sauces, right after you listen to this episode, that one would be a good companion episode to this one. But briefly, they are called "mother sauces" because they are the base sauces or foundational sauces that make up the derivative sauces, also known as "daughter sauces". These sauces allow chefs to modify and build upon them with aromatics, fats, acids, wines, herbs and spices to create dozens of other sauces. These sauces taught generations of

chefs the core ideas of thickening, balance and layering of flavor. Most of the sauces you know today can be traced back to one of these bases. Even modern gastronomists still lean on these fundamentals- whether it's a spherified beurre blanc or an espuma of demi glace.

And saucework isn't just French.. It's a global language of flavor. Every single cuisine in the world uses sauces as a way to carry spice, balance richness, introduce acidity and unify ingredients. In many cases, sauces aren't sidekicks.. They're the star of the show. In Mexico it's mole, in India it's curry gravy, Thailand is coconut based sauces, Indonesia it's sambal, Argentina it's chimichurri, Japan is soy based sauces.. Literally every country has some kind of signature sauce worked into its culinary catalog.

No matter where you cook or what you're cooking.. A sauce is a cultural signature. Whether it's built on roux, coconut milk, fermented chili, peanut paste or soy.. The technique behind the sauce reflects the values of the cuisine.. Richness, balance, depth, time or punch.

In most professional kitchens, sauces aren't just a part of a dish.. They're a performance benchmark. If you really wanna know whether someone's a chef, not just someone who knows how to cook, but someone who knows how to build flavor.. Watch them make a sauce. Sauces demand multi-layered awareness.. It's precision with texture, timing with reductions, patience with emulsions, restraint with seasoning and cleanliness in execution. It truly is where discipline meets instinct.. And you can't fake it.. You can't fake it, you just know.

Anyone can sear a steak.. But can you build a sauce from the fond left behind without killing it with salt, breaking the emulsion or flooding the plate? Saucework is a skill. A long time ago, high end kitchens had a guy that only made sauces. They called him a saucier and that's literally all that person did. Come in in the morning and make sauces for the line. And here's what saucework reveals about a cook:

Can they balance flavor under pressure?

Do they know how to develop depth from scraps and leftovers?

Can they hit service timing with a reduction that's nappe-thick and not broken?

Are they tasting? Adjusting? Mounting? Or just hoping?

And most of all...

Do they respect the details that no one sees, but everyone tastes?

A great saucier is often the backbone of the kitchen because it shows control, clarity and consistency. There's nowhere to hide in a pan sauce.. If the butter splits or the acidity is off or the salt's too aggressive.. It shines through.

So for my home cooks, saucework may sound super fancy and only for professional chefs and cooks, but it's really the fastest way to level up flavor without changing your ingredients and spending a ton of money. Most home dishes rely on repetition right? Ever find yourself eating the same shit all the time? Chicken thighs or breast.. Roasted vegetables.. Dry pasta.. Grilled meats.. I'm sure most home cooks eat 1 or more of these things a couple times a week without

changing it up.. But sauces? Sauces can make your meals more exciting without changing any of these core ingredients.

A lemon caper sauce turns chicken into a bistro plate.

A red wine reduction makes those grilled steaks feel like a real steakhouse entree.

A spoon of chimichurri over grilled vegetables brings life to otherwise boring ingredients.

If you've ever thought your cooking is bland or boring.. Sometimes it's not the ingredients, it's the lack of sauce.

And here's a pro tip.. You don't need fancy tools to make a sauce.. A saucepan and whisk is pretty much all you really need. You don't need 12 ingredients and a special trip to the grocery store.. Usually butter, acid and in some cases a wine or stock works really well. And you don't need to blow a bunch of money.. Just the time it takes to learn how to deglaze and reduce.

Sauces let you use scraps like onion ends, herb stems, old wine and leftovers creatively so that you can add depth, brightness or richness to anything... fast.

Whether you're on the line feeding 100 covers or at home cooking 4, sauces train your palate, teach you restraint and force technique. You'll learn how fat, acid and salt play together.. How to hold back just enough to let the dish speak and accent it rather than drown it.. And learn techniques like emulsifying, reducing, straining or mounting.

Sauces teach you care. Because a sauce says: I didn't just cook this.. I fucking crafted it"

So I know we covered a lot in that segment, but I wanna dive a little deeper in today's second segment about sauces in the home setting. Let's talk about accessibility, prep, storage and technique.. And this is important because sauces give home cooks flexibility.. Leftovers become intentional.. Simple proteins and meals start to feel luxurious.. That's a good thing. You should enjoy eating at home.. It shouldn't feel like a chore or a burden. To me, eating is the best part of my day.. It should be exciting.

You don't need a culinary degree to make sauces like a chef.. But you do need a handful of reliable techniques. I'm going to give you 5 sauces that you can make at home that will change your game and make shit exciting at the dinner table. With these 5 techniques it gives you range to do many things and will help you stretch leftovers, reinvent your repeats and make every day dinners feel like restaurant quality dishes and make simple ingredients enticing.

The first one is bechamel. If you remember from the mother sauces episode, this is a core sauce that can be made into a variety of things. Bechamel is your entry ticket to creamy sauces. It's the base for mac & cheese, pot pies, baked pastas and countless casseroles. The formula to make bechamel is so simple.. It's blonde roux + warm milk + seasoning. The seasoning is salt, pepper and a pinch of nutmeg... and if you add cheese it now becomes mornay which is a derivative sauce. Use this to bind leftovers into croquettes or pour it over roasted broccoli and

you have now made an elevated dish that will turn heads at the dinner table. If you haven't listened to the episode about elevating simple dishes, you should. It makes everyday eating an event.

The second one is another mother sauce.. Tomato sauce. Every home cook needs a go to tomato sauce. It's comforting, customizable and freezer friendly. Whether it's pasta night or baked eggs, this sauce gives you versatility in the kitchen. You can make tons of it at once and portion freeze it so you have it on hand at all times. And it doesn't have to be complicated... It's as easy as sauteing some garlic in olive oil, adding canned crushed tomatoes basil salt and a pinch of sugar and then simmering for 20 to 30 minutes. From this base sauce you could go just about anywhere with it. You could add onion, chili flakes or even butter to add flare and richness. I'll give you a few ideas here.. Adding chili and garlic creates the italian sauce arrabbiata. Adding cumin, paprika and bell peppers create a base for shakshuka and adding cream creates a pink sauce that goes well with every pasta.

The next technique is one of my favorites. The pan sauce. This technique could be your weeknight workhorse. After searing meat you can build a pan sauce in under 5 minutes using the fond that's left in the pan. We all remember what fond is, yes? Yeah you do, because you've liked, subscribed and listened to every single episode of the incredible discourse. Anyhow, after searing your protein, remove it and finish it in the oven if necessary.. Add a splash of wine or vinegar to the pan to deglaze and scrape up all the little bits of fond from the bottom... then add stock and reduce by half.. To finish mount with a little bit of butter and boom, you just made a basic pan sauce. And there are so many ways to go with this one. You can add shallots, herbs or a splash of cream and transform this sauce into something completely different. A good pan sauce turns one lonely pork chop into a dish with presence.

So now we go from the heat and turn our attention to sauces that don't need to be cooked at all. Let's talk about cream. Or yogurt based sauces. These sauces are perfect for cooling, brightening and balancing spicy or grilled dishes. The best part about these is there is no heat, can be made way in advance and have tremendous versatility. Start with yogurt, sour cream or creme fraiche.. Add an acid like lemon juice or vinegar.. Mix in garlic, herbs, spices or citrus zest.. And that's it. You can use these sauces for so many things. Grilled meats, roasted vegetables, grain bowls or even wraps. When a dish is hot and bold, these sauces bring contrast and calm.

My last technique will elevate many different things. Vinaigrettes and emulsions are more than salad dressings. Vinaigrettes can marinate proteins, finish roasted vegetables or be used as cold sauces. Emulsions teach you how to balance fat and acid.. A skill that transfers to every other sauce that you make. The rule of thumb for emulsions is 3 parts oil to 1 part acid.. Add a spoon of mustard or honey, minced garlic, shallot or herbs and then shake in a jar or blend. It couldn't be easier. And you could transform this by adding mayo or yogurt to make it creamy, or maybe blend in a roasted red pepper or avocado to give it some depth and character. This does so many things for your repertoire. You have marinades, sauces and salad dressing all with one technique.

Each of these sauces teaches a different skillset.. Bechamel trains your roux technique, pan sauces teach reduction and timing, vinaigrettes sharpen your balance of fat and acid, yogurt sauces show restraint and layering without heat and tomato sauces teach you to simmer, reduce and balance long cooked flavors.. Master these 5 and you won't just cook more confidently.. You'll start thinking like a chef.

These techniques will give you a bunch to do and allow you to be super creative. So try them.. And send me some photos of your work, or if you have questions about any of these techniques, reach out on the website and I'll be glad to help you.

So for my pros today I wanna talk about how you master sauces in a professional setting. You do this by creating tight systems, repetition, execution and then ultimately elevating these simple recipes to the next level. In the brigade the saucier was traditionally the highest ranking station cook. And they didn't just make the sauces, they often were the saute cook in charge of garnishes and composed plating. Even in modern kitchens where titles have become a grey area, this title still means something. It signals mastery, judgement and control under pressure. A cook can follow steps, but a saucier makes decisions.

Anyone can make a good sauce, but professionals do it every night with consistency, under pressure, in volume and are precise. They're fast and know all of the steps without second guessing. They can Multitask while reducing, whisking and tasting and adapt when things don't go as planned.

They thrive on consistency. The beurre blanc on tuesday tastes the same exact way as it did for saturday nights service and has the same texture across dozens and dozens of plates, every single night.

Professionals have great judgement.. They know exactly the right moment to pull a reduction so that it's not thin, but also not thick as molasses. Deciding a flavor combination like lemon over vinegar because the taste comes out cleaner and pairs well with the dish. Knowing when to add the salt to a sauce and how to treat garlic. All of these things are pivotal in your saucework chefs. The refinement is incredible. Instincts are what saves you and guides you here. It's not just how fast you can make a sauce, but also how fast you can fix it because things happen and you have to think on your feet and be prepared.

Texture is another really important element. A great saucier understands texture is as important as the flavor. You gotta know when to strain it versus when to leave rustic. When you want finesse, smoothness or shine, or if the sauce was built on chunky ingredients, or your finished plate is a bit more refined.. You strain it. When you want it to feel hearty and natural you don't. And this is also a judgement call. You have to know what the intention of the plate is so that you can make these kinda calls.

Timing is one of the biggest traits of a saucier, and this is where a lot of cooks fail. Not in technique, but in timing. If a sauce is finished too early, it breaks or thickens too much. If it finishes too late, now you're in the weeds and your plating suffers and throws off the rest of the other stations' timing. But when it's on time, you get that silky, hot, nappe-thick sauce and it hits the plate seconds before it goes up. The saucier works backwards from the pick up time so their sauce finishes reducing just as the protein is resting. It gets mounted and seasoned at the last second and hits the pass with no reheat, no hold and absolutely no compromise. If the meat rests for 5 minutes, your sauce should finish at 4 minutes and 30 seconds.

And lastly, a saucier knows how to hold a sauce without breaking it. A broken sauce is more than ugly, it's a plate killer. You gotta know which sauces can hold, which must be made a la minute, which need help holding and then how to fix them should they break. Knowing this information will literally save you on the line. But it takes time to understand this and prepare yourself. This is a learn by doing.. You have to know the visual cues and when to make a move. And you can only get these by repetition and experience. I'm going to say that this is one of the jobs that you can't just walk on and master. You gotta be in it, you have to see it all, learn from your mistakes and prepare yourself.

What separates a cook from a saucier is a blend of technical precision, decision-making under pressure, a fine tuned palate, perfect timing and being cool, calm and collected when shit hits the fan. It's not about ego or flair.. It's about quiet, consistent control. The best sauciers don't talk about their sauces, other people do.

Today's final thought leads us to the thought of what you could create when saucework is a central focus and has been mastered. In any setting, sauces can elevate and transform dishes to an incredible experience. It takes time, control and patience to master these things. Some people will say that the sauce is the most important part of a composed dish. It brings dishes together and delivers that memorable bite. If you're at home, take 1 of these 5 techniques that I explained and work on one at a time, and master them. If you need help being creative, go back and listen to the mother sauces episode. I give you different combinations and formulas for derivative sauces that will help you expand your bag of tricks and make things interesting on your dinner table. For my pros.. Focus. That's really the key, focus and practice. Look for those visual cues, take notes on what went wrong and practice with intention. Know what you're going for. Understand what the term "Nappe" means. And don't start with the hard shit either.. Start at the basic, fundamental things and work your way up. Don't be dumb and try to make demi glace if you don't know how to put together a stock first. Every lesson in the kitchen builds from a previous one. When your foundation is solid, you go to the next step.. And then the next and so on.

Anyhow, Like and subscribe so you never miss a beat of the show. Leave 5 stars on wherever you're listening to this.. And please leave 5 stars if you haven't already. It helps us get the show out to other culinarians and make the cooking world a much better place. Visit us on X and the website and leave us a comment or a picture of what you're working on. The downloadable resource for this episode will be up soon and will focus on basic sauce work that you can

expand on later. Next time we will be talking about meat temperatures and I'll give you some tips and secrets on how to perfect that. I appreciate your time as always.. I am Mark Grigsby, and you've just been put through another amazing episode of the incredible discourse.