Quick Cheese Sauce

Quick · Makes about 1½ cups (serves 4)

Ken's note: TBD

Cream cheese and heavy cream carry the sauce; shredded cheese gives the flavor, so use whatever you like. No flour, no roux. Ready in 15 minutes. Shred the cheese yourself from a block; it melts smoother than the pre-shredded kind.

Ingredients

- ¼ cup (4 Tbsp) unsalted butter
- ¼ cup cream cheese (2 oz)
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1 cup (4 oz) shredded cheese (see below)
- Black pepper, and a pinch of cayenne or dry mustard (optional)
- Salt

Method

1. Melt the butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Add the cream cheese and stir until melted. Slowly stir in the cream and keep stirring until it comes to a boil. Add the shredded cheese and stir until it is fully melted. Simmer over low heat 5–10 minutes, until it is as thick as you like; simmer longer for a thicker sauce. It thickens slightly as it cools; thin it with a splash of water or milk. Taste and salt at the end; the cheese is already salty.
2. For a pound of pasta, double the sauce. For the classic flour-and-milk version, see Béchamel and Mornay.

Notes

Choose the cheese

- **Sharp cheddar:** macaroni, broccoli, baked potatoes, burgers.
- **Pepper Jack:** nachos, tacos, chili dogs.
- **Gruyère or Swiss:** cauliflower, gratins, croque monsieur.
- **Parmesan, Pecorino, or a mix:** toss with hot fettuccine for a quick Alfredo-style pasta.
- **Smoked Gouda or any melter:** pour over roasted vegetables or eggs.