



Quiche Lorraine

By Chef Bob Skolnick Photography by Marty Snortum Studio



Thank the French for this simply perfect dish. Quiche Lorraine was born in the Alsace-Lorraine region of France (which borders Germany) in the sixteenth century as an open breakfast tart. The name “quiche” is derived from the German word *kuchen*, meaning cake. Over time, quiche has come to be known as a tart that may contain many things; however the traditional French version is made with cream, eggs and smoked bacon. There is some speculation as to whether cheese was a part of the early recipes. I personally think the dish would not be as appealing without the cheese.

Speaking of cheese, I only use Gruyere cheese (a yellow cheese made from cow’s milk) for this dish. Regular Swiss cheese is nice, but the taste of Gruyere is superior. It was originally made in Switzerland, and is named after the Swiss village of Gruyeres. It is hard, slightly salty, and piquant. When fully aged (three to twelve months) it tends to have small holes and cracks.

Another preference with my quiche is to make it without a crust. I think the flavor of a pastry crust diminishes the impact of the bacon, onion, cheese and custard to the taste buds. This contradicts the conventional thought that Quiche Lorraine is a tart, but that is my preference.

There are two ways to make a quiche without crust: either bake it in individual ramekins, or soufflé dishes like any other baked custard. If you want your quiche to have the height and volume of a cheesecake, then bake it in a spring form cake pan. (I have samples of both included in this article.)

After the Gruyere cheese, the second key to great quiche is to use leaner bacon and brown the onions. Browned onions just impart a better flavor than diced, raw onions.



Quiche Lorraine

Serves 4

(Baked in individual 6 oz. ramekins or a ceramic tart dish)

12 oz thick sliced bacon - diced ¼ inch	4 oz unsalted butter
1 each large Spanish onion - diced ¼ inch	1tsp leaf thyme
2 cloves garlic - diced fine	1tsp chopped fresh parsley
16 oz Gruyere cheese - shredded	pepper to taste
4 each large eggs	paprika for color
2 cups Half & Half	

1. Place the diced raw bacon into a heavy bottom sauté pan and cook until the bacon bits are browned and crisp. Remove the bacon bits from the rendered bacon fat with a slotted spoon and set aside to cool. Retain the bacon fat.
2. Place the diced onion into the bacon fat and sauté until medium brown, being careful not to burn. As the onions start to get brown, add the minced garlic and sauté altogether for 30 seconds for the garlic to brown slightly. Remove the sauté pan from the heat and strain out the browned onion and garlic and set aside to cool.
3. Once cooled, combine the onions, garlic, bacon bits, Gruyere cheese, thyme and parsley and gently toss in a stainless steel bowl. Be careful not to press on the cheese, as you want it to remain fluffy and shredded.
4. Using a pastry brush, brush the bacon fat onto the inside of your ramekins or soufflé dishes, lightly coating the sides and bottom.
5. Gently fill the dishes with the cheese, onion, bacon and herb mixture so that it is slightly heaped above the outer edge of the dish. Place the ramekins into a pan with sides that are higher than the ramekin and keep them separated with several inches inbetween each ramekin.
6. In a separate stainless steel bowl, whip the eggs vigorously to mix and aerate (to add volume). Blend in the half and half and season with pepper. Do not add salt, as the bacon and cheese already bring salt to this dish.
7. Transfer the egg custard mixture to a pitcher and now fill each ramekin with the custard mixture to just below the top edge. Sprinkle a little paprika on top and place a thin slice of unsalted butter on top of each ramekin.
8. Pour hot water into the pan so that it comes two-thirds of the way up the side of the ramekin. Place the water bath pan with the quiche ramekins into a preheated oven of 350 degrees. After baking 25 or 30 minutes, test the centers with a cake-testing wire or the tip of a knife. If the tip comes out clean and hot, the quiche is done. You can also touch the center to see if it is firm. Over baking can be as bad as under baking, as the custard will separate.
9. Once cooked, remove the ramekins from the water bath and let cool on an elevated cooling rack for 15 minutes. When ready to serve, run the tip of a paring knife around the inside of the ramekin keeping pressure on the ramekin wall. Once loosened, the quiche will pop out by inverting it onto a plate or your hand.



Serving Suggestions:

This quiche pairs well with wilted spinach or other greens such as Swiss chard. You can also serve with a half-broiled tomato.

Alternative Filling Suggestions:

1. Instead of bacon, use smoked salmon or diced shitake mushrooms.
2. Replace the thyme with anchiote powder and replace the bacon with chorizo.

Note:

If you add uncooked vegetables to your quiche, cut back slightly on the half and half as the vegetables will seep water and dilute the custard.



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