

Homemade Mayonnaise

A classic cold emulsion of egg yolk and neutral oil, stabilized with mustard and brightened with acid. Made by hand with a whisk, the mayo develops into a thick, glossy, versatile condiment with fresh, bright flavor. Yields about 1 1/4 cups.

Ingredients

Large egg yolk	1	Granulated sugar	1/4 tsp.
Dijon mustard	1 tsp.	Neutral oil	1 cup
Fresh lemon juice	1 Tbsp.		
White wine vinegar	1 tsp.		
Fine sea salt	1/4 tsp.		

Neutral oil: canola, vegetable, or grapeseed oil. For richer flavor, use half neutral oil and half light olive oil.

Directions

Bring **egg yolk** to room temperature — Measure **lemon juice** and **vinegar**; divide **lemon juice** in half — Have **oil** ready in a vessel with a pour spout

1. In a medium bowl, combine 1 **egg yolk** (room temperature), 1 tsp. **Dijon mustard**, half the **lemon juice** (1/2 Tbsp.), 1/4 tsp. **salt**, and 1/4 tsp. **sugar**. Whisk vigorously for 30 seconds until mixture is smooth, slightly thickened, and lightened in color. The **mustard** and **egg yolk** should be fully integrated with no streaks.
2. Begin adding **oil** extremely slowly—literally drop by drop. Add 3-4 drops of **oil**, then whisk vigorously for 5-10 seconds until fully incorporated. Repeat this process, adding a few drops at a time and whisking thoroughly between each addition. This is the critical emulsion-building phase. Continue for the first 1/4 cup of **oil**, about 3-5 minutes. The mixture will begin to thicken noticeably and turn pale yellow, indicating the emulsion has formed successfully.

3. Once the emulsion has formed and the mixture appears thick and glossy (after about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup **oil**), you can add **oil** more quickly. Pour **oil** in a thin, steady stream (about the thickness of a pencil lead) while whisking constantly and vigorously. Move the whisk in rapid circular motions, ensuring the **oil** is incorporated as it's added. The mayonnaise will continue to thicken and become very pale, creamy, and glossy. If the mixture becomes extremely thick and difficult to whisk (like stiff frosting), pause and whisk in 1 tsp. water or **lemon juice** to thin slightly, then continue adding **oil**.
4. Once all **oil** is incorporated, add remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbsp. **lemon juice** and 1 tsp. **white wine vinegar**. Whisk thoroughly until the acid is fully integrated. The mayonnaise should be thick, glossy, and hold soft peaks when the whisk is lifted. It should have a smooth, creamy texture with no visible oil separation.
5. Taste and adjust seasoning. The mayonnaise should be well-balanced: mildly tangy from the acid, subtly sweet, and properly salted. Add more **salt**, **lemon juice**, or **sugar** as needed. Remember that flavors will be slightly muted when cold, so season assertively.
6. Transfer to an airtight container and refrigerate for at least *30 minutes* before using to allow flavors to meld and texture to firm slightly. The mayonnaise is ready when it's cold throughout, very thick, and spreadable.

If Emulsion Breaks: If the mayonnaise suddenly becomes thin, greasy, and separated (oil pools on top), the emulsion has broken. To fix: In a clean bowl, add 1 tsp. cold water or fresh **lemon juice**. Whisk briefly. Slowly whisk in the broken mayonnaise, treating it like the **oil**—start with drops, then increase to a thin stream as the emulsion reforms. The fresh liquid provides new surface area for re-emulsification. Alternatively, use 1 fresh **egg yolk** instead of water for even more reliable results.

Equipment Required

- Medium bowl (stable and wide)
- Whisk (balloon whisk preferred)
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Small vessel with pour spout for oil (liquid measuring cup or small pitcher)
- Rubber spatula
- Airtight container for storage
- Optional: damp kitchen towel (to stabilize bowl while whisking)

Yield

- Makes about $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups mayonnaise
- Approximately 10 servings (2 Tbsp. each)

Mise en Place

- Bring **egg yolk** to room temperature (*30-60 minutes* on counter, or place whole egg in warm water for *5 minutes*)—room temperature eggs emulsify more easily
- Measure $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbsp. **lemon juice** in *Small Bowl #1* (for initial mixture)
- Measure remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbsp. **lemon juice** and 1 tsp. **vinegar** in *Small Bowl #2* (for finishing)
- Measure 1 cup **oil** into vessel with pour spout—have ready
- Set damp towel under bowl to prevent spinning while whisking
- Have clean bowl and extra **lemon juice** ready in case emulsion breaks

Ingredient Tips

- **Egg yolk** must be fresh and room temperature for best emulsification
- **Dijon mustard** acts as an emulsifier and adds subtle flavor—do not omit
- **Neutral oils** (canola, vegetable, grapeseed) create classic Hellmann's-style flavor
- Light or pure **olive oil** can replace half the neutral oil for richer flavor; avoid extra virgin olive oil (too assertive and can taste bitter)
- **White wine vinegar** is milder than distilled white vinegar; both work
- **Lemon juice** must be fresh-squeezed—bottled juice has off-flavors
- **Sugar** is optional but mimics commercial mayo sweetness
- Fine **sea salt** or table salt dissolves easily; kosher salt works but may not dissolve completely

Preparation Tips

- Room temperature ingredients are critical—cold **egg yolks** won't emulsify properly and cold **oil** is harder to incorporate
- The drop-by-drop phase for the first $\frac{1}{4}$ cup **oil** is essential—rushing this step causes the emulsion to break
- Vigorous, constant whisking creates the mechanical action needed to break **oil** into tiny droplets
- Once emulsion forms (mixture thickens noticeably), you can add **oil** faster, but never in a flood—thin stream only

- If mixture gets too thick before all **oil** is added, thin with water or **lemon juice**—this provides more liquid phase for the remaining **oil**
- A damp towel under the bowl prevents it from spinning while you whisk
- Adding acid in two stages (some at start, rest at finish) helps stabilize emulsion and provides final flavor adjustment
- If **arm** gets tired during whisking, take brief breaks—the partially formed emulsion will hold for *30-60 seconds*

Make Ahead & Storage

- Homemade mayonnaise contains raw **egg**—refrigerate immediately
- Store in airtight container in refrigerator for *3-5 days*
- Bring to room temperature *10 minutes* before using for best spreadability and flavor
- If mayonnaise separates slightly during storage, whisk vigorously to re-emulsify
- Do not freeze—emulsion breaks and texture degrades

- Flavor is best within *48 hours* of making
- Commercial mayonnaise lasts months due to preservatives and pasteurized eggs; homemade has shorter shelf life

Serving Suggestions

- Use as base for sandwich spreads, potato salad, egg salad, tuna salad, and coleslaw
- Transform into aioli: add 2-4 cloves crushed **garlic** with **egg yolk**, use half **olive oil**
- Make tartar sauce: add chopped pickles, capers, fresh dill, and **lemon juice**
- Create remoulade: add Dijon, capers, cornichons, herbs, and paprika
- Make spicy mayo: whisk in sriracha, sambal oelek, or chipotle in adobo
- Make herb mayo: blend with fresh basil, tarragon, or chives
- Serve with french fries, roasted vegetables, grilled fish, or sandwiches
- Use as binder for crab cakes or as spread for burgers