

Anson Mills

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Plain Sugared Crêpes

Time: 15 minutes to make the batter, plus 2 hours or more to rest it. The crêpes themselves go very quickly once you have the hang of it.

You would think the lilting circumflex at its very center might have saved the crêpe from the ignoble flames of tableside showmanship that plagued it for years; or that the miserly adjectives standing in its wake might, over time, have given way to those more favorable. But as much as we love crêpes, we consign ourselves to hating most of them, and acknowledge they deserve all the criticism they get: yes, they are dry and flavorless, flabby and eggy, pale and drawn. As beautiful as a crêpe should be, it is often just a sad, skinny pancake bunched up around a shapeless filling, or a thin heating pad which, in melting a scoop of ice cream, grows cold itself.

I, Kay, have made hundreds of crêpes, and, if I daresay, they are excellent crêpes. I learned to make them while working for the catering division of the oldest department store in Berlin called KaDeWe, specifically for the LeNôtre pastry concern within that operation. I learned to make them because, in addition to my normal job, piping chou paste, glazing petit fours, icing tortes or folding whipped cream into mousse with a cadre of well-trained German chefs and a French master, I was consigned on a regular basis to the crêpe stand on the floor below. There I swirled 15-inch round crêpes out on flat griddles three at a time—all day—for patrons visiting the vast food court in KaDeWe. It felt like a form of punishment. The crêpes, however, were extraordinary, lacy and brown, with the irresistible scent of brown butter and liqueur that drew crowds. During my exile at the crêpe stand I learned more about crêpes than I'd ever expected to know, and developed a real taste for them (which I indulged back by the dishwasher when the stand was empty). I did not depart KaDeWe with the LeNôtre crêpe recipe, but palate memory served me well. I've gotten very, very close to re-creating these fabulous crêpes—close enough to call them a match--and I've made them now for years at dinner parties, and just for fun—because nothing is more fun than eating a hot crêpe straight out of the pan with butter and sugar. They have acquired a significant fan base. Now I have redrafted the recipe with Anson Mills Fine Cloth-bolted Pastry Flour. It is my very favorite Anson Mills product and my very favorite recipe. I cannot offer you more than that.

Equipment Mise en Place

For this recipe you will need a small saucepan; a food processor or stand mixer; a fine conical sieve; a glass measuring cup or pitcher; a rubber spatula; a metal spatula; and a well-seasoned 10-inch skillet, crêpe pan or griddle.

Cooking Remarks

A crêpe is not difficult to make. A good crêpe is not more difficult to make than a bad one. You need a recipe with enough butter for the crêpe to brown to supple crispness and flavor without turning stiff and dry. You need the correct egg, flour and milk ratios so the crêpe stays creamy inside. You need a well-seasoned pan whose diameter does not exceed that of the burner, and some pretty serious heat—not steak-searing heat, but not cautious warming heat either. We favor cast iron for producing the gorgeous brown lace that is a perfect crêpe, but cast iron makes for heavy handling. If you're working a skillet with sides, forget cast iron. Your wrist will never make it through the deft machinations necessary to move the batter around the pan. Cast iron is suited to griddle cookery in which the crêpe is stroked thin with a T-shaped wooden spatula and the pan is not manipulated by the wrist. If you have those things, use them. You probably don't need advice from us, anyway. We don't recommend non-stick pans under any circumstance—a crêpe must stick to and grip the bottom of the pan to develop the correct lacy texture, not skate around without purchase. Our favorite pan turns out to be a very basic 10-inch All-Clad skillet seasoned to within an inch of its

Ingredients

for the crêpes

- 8 tablespoons (4 ounces) unsalted European-style butter
- 3 large eggs
- 1 cup (8 ounces) whole milk
- 4.7 ounces (about 1 sifted cup) Anson Mills Fine Cloth-Bolted Pastry Flour
- 5 teaspoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1 ½ tablespoons dark rum (if you're making the crêpe cake recipe, use Calvados)
- 1 ½ tablespoons Cointreau or Grand Marnier

for cooking the crêpes

- 3 tablespoons (1 ½ ounces) European-style unsalted butter

for dressing the crêpes

- soft butter or Lemon Butter
- granulated sugar

Directions

- Brown the butter:*** Melt the butter in a small saucepan over low heat, stirring with a wooden spoon to scrape the browning milk solids back into the butter, until the butter is the color of a filbert in the shell and the kitchen smells miraculous, about 3 minutes. Pull the pan off the heat and set it aside to cool just slightly.
- To make the crêpe batter in a food processor:*** Place the eggs in the work bowl and process to liquefy. Add the flour, sugar and salt and run the processor until the mixture is smooth, shiny and drips heavily from a spoon, pausing the machine once or twice to scrape down the sides of the bowl. With the processor running, pour the

life, and forbidden to cook anything but crêpes.

How do you get a well-seasoned pan? By starting with a clean pan. If the pan contains any cooking film or residue, scrub it first with a gentle scouring powder like Bon Amie or Barkeeper's Friend. Rinse and dry it well. Heat the empty pan over medium-low heat for several minutes, then add enough vegetable oil to cover the bottom generously. Allow the oil to heat through for a few minutes. Pull the pan off the heat and add enough coarse salt to create an oil-moistened heavy salt scrub. Scour the bottom and sides of the pan briskly with a clean old cloth or wadded up paper towels. Rinse the pan with hot water only—no soap—and dry it well. Your pan should now be seasoned.

What makes this recipe in part so fine is the sexy combination of rum and orange liqueur with brown butter. Should you wish to forego alcohol in the batter, by all means do so—substitute a half teaspoon of vanilla and add another tablespoon of milk—but the flavor dimensionality of the crêpes will be diminished.

At the crêpe stand where I worked we made crêpes with warm fruit compote—tiny strawberries, sour cherries and apples—served with pastry cream or crème anglaise. These were all lovely, but the crêpes that drew the crowds were

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warm butter through the tube, pausing once to scrape down the sides of the bowl. As the machine continues to run, add the milk and liqueurs. Remove the lid, detach the bowl and pour the crêpe batter through a fine conical sieve set over a 4-quart glass measuring cup or a similarly-sized vessel with a pour spout. Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours or up to 24.

3. *To make the crêpe batter with a stand mixer:* beat the eggs with the paddle attachment on medium speed until combined, about 20 seconds. Reduce the heat to low and stir in the flour, sugar and salt. Increase the heat to medium-high and continue to beat, scraping down the bowl from time to time, until the mixture is smooth, shiny and drips heavily from a spoon. Reduce the heat to low and add the warm butter in a slow steady stream, scraping down the sides of the bowl if necessary. With the mixer running, add the milk in 3 additions, scraping the sides of the bowl. Stir in the liqueurs. Pour the crêpe batter through a fine conical sieve set over a 4-quart glass measuring cup or a or a similarly-sized vessel with a pour spout. Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours or up to 24.

4. *Clarify the butter:* Melt 3 tablespoons of butter in a small saucepan over low heat. Remove the pan from the heat, tilt it, and skim off the surface foam with a spoon. Discard the foam. Spoon the clear yellow butterfat into a bowl, leaving the watery milk solids in the pan behind. Discard the milk solids. Set the butter aside.

5. *Cook the crêpes:* Heat a well-seasoned 10-inch skillet, griddle or crêpe pan over medium-high heat for 5 minutes. Add half a teaspoon of clarified butter to the skillet—it should smoke--and polish the bottom with folded paper towels to glaze it with butter. Drop a teaspoon or so of batter onto the skillet to test the heat. If the heat is correct, the skillet will sizzle appreciatively and the bottom surface of crêpe will show lacy brown blisters when lifted with the edge of a spatula; if it is not, the bottom surface will be smooth, like a pancake. When the temperature is correct, pour about a third cup of batter across the upper half of the skillet, and begin tipping the pan back and forth to cover the bottom with a thin, even layer. The skillet should be hot enough to grip the batter as it travels across the pan and issue the sound of distant, but enthusiastic, applause. Turn the crêpe with a spatula. Make the crêpes one by one and serve them hot, lacy side up. Don't stand on ceremony by holding the finished crêpes in a warm oven and serving them all at once. It's every man, woman or child for himself, herself or itself in this scenario, and the cook gets no rest!

Makes 14 10-inch crêpes

the Crêpes Liqueur, those served with granulated sugar and enough Grand Marnier or Calvados to produce a pleasingly ephemeral light-headedness—it was the volatile 80-proof aroma rising off the steaming crêpes, you see. Over the years, however, I have come to prefer the simplest crêpes of all: those dressed with butter and sugar. Feel free to create your own filling—or look to our magnificent Crêpe Cake recipe on the next page—but don't miss the simple satisfaction of a minimally dressed blistering hot crêpe!

By the way, the Lemon Butter recipe we ran with the Buckwheat Pancakes in our last newsletter would be a superb accessory to these crêpes.

The prettiest side of the crêpe is the side first down in the pan. To display its best side, run the spatula under the crêpe in the pan at its midsection, lift it as a half circle, place it on the plate, slide the spatula out, and fold the crêpe into a triangle. Crêpes also taste fabulous rolled into a log and eaten in a few bites.