



ANSON MILLS

Plain Sugared Crêpes

Yield

Fourteen 10-inch crêpes

Time

15 minutes to make the batter, plus 2 hours or more to rest it; making the crêpes themselves goes very quickly once you have the hang of it

Baking Notes

A crêpe is not difficult to make. And 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 its heft makes for heavy handling. 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.

If you're working with a skillet, forget cast iron. Your wrist will never make it through the deft machinations necessary to move the batter around the pan. We don't recommend nonstick pans under any circumstance when it comes to crêpes—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 life, and forbidden to cook anything but 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.

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 ½ teaspoon of vanilla and add another 2½ tablespoons of milk—but the flavor dimension of the crêpes will be diminished.

By the way, the Lemon Butter we run with our Buckwheat Buttermilk Pancakes would be a superb accessory to these crêpes.

Equipment Mise en Place

For this recipe, you will need a small heavy-bottomed saucepan; a wooden spoon; a food processor or stand mixer; a rubber spatula; a fine-mesh sieve; a 1-quart liquid measuring cup

or similarly sized vessel with a pour spout; a metal spatula; and a well-seasoned 10-inch skillet or crêpe pan.

Ingredients

for the crêpe batter

4 ounces (8 tablespoons) unsalted European-style butter

3 large eggs

4.7 ounces (1 cup) Anson Mills Colonial Style Fine Cloth-Bolted Pastry Flour

5 teaspoons sugar

½ teaspoon fine sea salt

8 ounces (1 cup) whole milk

1½ tablespoons dark rum (if you're making Crêpe Cake with Roasted Apples and Reduced Cider Syrup, use Calvados)

1½ tablespoons Cointreau or Grand Marnier

for cooking the crêpes

1.5 ounces (3 tablespoons) unsalted European-style butter

for dressing the crêpes

Softened unsalted European-style butter or Lemon Butter

Sugar

Directions

1. Make the crêpe batter: Melt the butter in a small heavy-bottomed 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 hazelnut in the shell and the kitchen smells miraculous, 3 to 5 minutes. Pull the pan off the heat and set it aside to cool just slightly.

2. If using a food processor: Process the eggs until well combined. With the machine running, add the flour, sugar, and salt and process until the mixture is smooth and shiny and drips heavily from a spoon, pausing the machine once or twice to scrape down the sides of the bowl. With the machine running, pour in the warm brown butter, pausing once to scrape down the sides of the bowl. As the machine continues to run, add the milk, rum, and liqueur. Pour the batter through a fine-mesh sieve set over a 1-quart liquid measuring cup or a similarly sized vessel with a pour spout. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or up to 24.

If using a stand mixer: Beat the eggs with the flat beater 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 and 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 rum and liqueur. Pour the batter through a fine-mesh sieve set over a 1-quart glass measuring cup or a similarly sized vessel with a pour spout. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or up to 24.

3. Clarify the butter for cooking the crêpes: Melt the butter in a small saucepan over low heat. Remove the pan from the heat, tilt it gently, and, using a spoon, skim off and discard the foam from the surface. Spoon the clear yellow butterfat into a small bowl; discard the water and milk solids left in the pan. Set the clarified butter aside.

4. Cook and serve the crêpes: Heat a well-seasoned 10-inch skillet or crêpe pan over medium-high heat for 5 minutes. Add ½ teaspoon of the clarified butter to the skillet—it should smoke—and polish the surface with folded paper towels to glaze it with butter. Drop in teaspoon or so of batter to test the heat. If the heat is correct, the skillet will sizzle appreciatively and the bottom of crêpe will show lacy brown blisters when lifted with the tip of a metal spatula; if it is not, the bottom will be smooth, like a pancake. When the temperature is correct, pour about ⅓ cup of batter across the half of the skillet opposite the handle, lift the skillet, and begin tilting it back and forth to coat the entire surface with a thin, even layer of batter. The skillet should be hot enough to grip the batter as it travels across the surface and issue the sound of distant, but enthusiastic, applause. Cook the crêpe until lacy brown on the bottom, about 1 minute (or less, depending on your burner and pan), use an icing spatula to carefully flip it, and cook the second side until nicely browned, 30 to 45 seconds. Serve the crêpe hot, folded into quarters, lacy side facing out. Glide a pat of butter over the top and finish with a shower of granulated sugar. 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!