

RECIPE

French Crêpes

If you have the time and interest, French crêpes are sure to please! Make them ahead of time and serve them during book club with a variety of fillings available, or make them during your gathering as part of the event, and serve them hot and fresh. If you don't already have your own favorite recipe and technique, here's one I adapted from an online recipe in my own kitchen. Verdict: delicious!

*Note: If you plan to make these during the event, consider making the batter ahead of time so it can be all "rested up" before you want to cook them. (Explained under Instructions.)



Ingredients

This is enough for about eight crêpes. Double or triple as necessary.

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ cups milk
- 2 large eggs
- Pinch of salt
- 2 tablespoons of melted butter
- Canola oil for cooking

Instructions

Make the batter. Place the flour, milk, eggs, salt, and melted butter in a blender and blend for about 20 seconds until batter is smooth. Or you could whisk everything together in a bowl until thoroughly combined and frothy.

Let the batter rest. Cover the bowl and let the batter sit for an hour on the counter. Don't skip this step! They won't turn out the same.

Cook the crêpes. Place the pan over medium heat and add a small amount of oil to coat the bottom of the pan. Once hot, pour in about ¼ cup of batter. Immediately pick up the pan and swirl it to coax the batter into an even layer on the bottom of the pan. (If the batter starts cooking before you're able to spread it evenly on the bottom of the pan, the heat is too high.)

Flip the crêpe. When the crêpe has browned slightly on the bottom, carefully work a spatula underneath it and flip. Cook the second side briefly, just to set the batter. Tilt the pan and loosen the crêpe, then slide it onto the cooling rack.

Repeat. Continue making crêpes with the rest of the batter, adding more oil as needed to keep the crêpes from sticking.

If not eating the crêpes immediately, stack them one on top of the other as they cool. If they seem sticky, put a square of plastic wrap or parchment paper between them. Place the stack in a sealable plastic bag and store in the refrigerator for a few days or in the freezer for a few months.

Offer a variety of ways to fill the crêpes. Ideas include: Nutella, sliced strawberries and bananas, or even cheese and chives. My favorite version is to sprinkle sugar over the crêpe, then squeeze fresh lemon juice on it, fold it into quarters, and eat! Bon appétit!

*Recipe adapted from www.thekitchn.com.

RECIPE

Classic French Palmiers

I've been experimenting with French recipes that would be the perfect accompaniment for your book club discussion on *The Mark of the King*. Crêpes are delightful, but if you're short on time (or confidence!), opt for French palmiers instead! The recipe is so simple, and the results so impressive, both you and your guests will love it.



Ingredients

Puff pastry, either homemade or store bought, which is what I used. (I used Pepperidge Farm brand, but if you can find a brand such as DuFour that uses only butter, not shortening or vegetable oil, the taste will be even better.)

Sugar. (I used demerara because of its coarse texture—and it's also not as sweet as white or brown sugar—but you can use whichever kind you want.)

Instructions

Thaw the puff pastry, if frozen, either in the refrigerator overnight or on the counter for about half an hour or so. When it's pliable but still cool, it's ready.

Roll out the puff pastry to even out the seams.

Sprinkle sugar in an even layer over the surface of the dough. Roll over it lightly with a rolling pin to press the sugar into the dough.

Fold the left and the right sides of the dough inward, lengthwise, so they meet in the middle. Your rectangle should now be half the width it was when you started.

Sprinkle sugar over the dough again, and roll over the dough lightly to press in the sugar.

Fold the left side of your rectangle over the right side. Now you should have a very long, flat length of dough.

Cover and refrigerate 30 minutes to make the dough easier to cut. This step will also help the palmiers puff better in the oven.

Heat the oven to 425°F.

After chilling, slice the log into cookies roughly 1 inch wide.

Transfer the cookies to a parchment-lined baking sheet, cut side up. (Psst: I didn't have parchment paper when I made these, so I just put them on baking stones, and they turned out just fine.) Sprinkle the cookies with more sugar, if desired. Give the palmiers plenty of space to puff up in the oven. On a baking sheet that I normally use for a dozen cookies, I placed three rows of two palmiers, and that was perfect. If you bake in batches, keep the un-baked cookies in the fridge until it's their turn to bake.

Bake for 18 to 20 minutes, until dark golden.

Cool and eat! Let the palmiers cool for a few minutes on the baking sheet, then transfer to a cooling rack to cool completely. Palmiers are best the day they are made, but can be stored in an airtight container for several days.

Variations to try, instead of sugar, are shredded cheese, minced lemon peel, or finely chopped dried fruit.

It's a perfect, light treat to accompany cider, coffee, or tea—and of course, a good book club discussion! Enjoy!