

## PANCAKES

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Pair jams that match or complement your grains and fresh fruit, depending on what's in season and available. Stuff I like: Sqirl's Persian mulberry jam, Red Bread's blueberry jam, Jam's apricot-almond jam, Smucker's boysenberry syrup.

### WHOLE GRAIN GAINS

Although you can use white flour or even a mix if you really need to, these days, I make only whole grain pancakes. Using whole grain flour give your pancakes more flavor, make them a bit more nutritious and gives you a good reason to source local or well-regarded flours, but it also means you can take a break from flipping, make yourself another cortado and then whisk the bowl without worry.

### A COFFEE STATION

To drink with all this: a pitcher of orange juice. Hot spiced cider (add dashes of cinnamon, ginger, cayenne and taste as you go) is a great pairing; if your party is late in the day and your guests are inclined, Calvados is a nice addition. But pancakes want to be served with coffee. Meanwhile, depending on how many folks are drinking, I also make a batch in the bright red Bialetti espresso-maker my daughter takes with her on trips; or the cezve, or Turkish coffee pot, that I got in Istanbul.

### THE LEFTOVERS

If you don't use all the pancake batter — say, you've doubled or tripled the recipes, as I mostly do, for fear of under-feeding folks — just put the extra batter in the fridge, where it will keep for one or a few days. The great thing about using whole grain flour is that the batter is resilient, even benefiting from a bit of a longer rest. If your kids get up for breakfast before school, make more pancakes: Just add more milk to make the cold batter pourable. Add any leftover sauteed apples to the batter; or if you have extra apples but no more pancake batter, put them on toast or stir them into porridge.

### BLUEBERRY CORNMEAL PANCAKES

55 minutes. Serves 4 to 6

**¼ cup (½ stick) unsalted butter, melted, plus extra for the griddle**  
**1½ cups whole milk**  
**2 eggs**  
**1 teaspoon vanilla**  
**1 cup flour**  
**½ cup cornmeal**  
**½ cup corn flour**  
**2 tablespoons sugar**  
**1 tablespoon baking powder**  
**¾ teaspoon kosher salt**  
**2 cups blueberries**

1. In a bowl, combine the butter, milk, eggs and vanilla and whisk until well-combined. Set aside.

2. In a separate, large mixing bowl, add the flour, cornmeal, corn flour, sugar, baking powder and salt and mix well. Add the blueberries. Gradually stir the milk mixture into the flour mixture. This makes about 4 cups of batter.

3. Heat a skillet over medium-high heat with enough butter to coat the pan. Spoon the batter into the hot skillet in any size. Cook until the pancakes bubble, lifting their sides to see done-ness: You want a dark gold. Flip the pancakes and cook until golden brown on the other side. Repeat with the rest of the batter.

Note: From Amy Scattergood

### LEMON RICOTTA

30 minutes. Makes 1½ cups

**1 quart whole milk**  
**1 cup heavy cream**  
**1 teaspoon kosher salt**  
**¼ cup lemon juice**  
**1 tablespoon lemon zest**  
**¼ teaspoon salt**

1. Line a strainer with cheesecloth and set it over a large bowl. Set aside.

2. In a large saucepan over high heat, combine the milk and cream and bring to a boil. As soon as it boils, remove the pan from the heat and add the salt and lemon juice. Stir and let rest for 15 minutes while the curds separate.

3. Strain the mixture through the prepared cheesecloth-lined strainer. When all of the liquid has drained, discard it and spoon the fresh ricotta into a serving bowl. The cheese will be loose and creamy. For thicker cheese, allow it to strain longer. Stir in the lemon zest and season with ¼ teaspoon salt or to taste.

Note: From Amy Scattergood.

### WHOLE WHEAT PANCAKES

45 minutes. Serves 4

**¼ cup (½ stick) unsalted butter, melted, plus extra for the griddle**  
**1 cup milk**  
**2 eggs**  
**1 tablespoon vanilla**  
**2 cups whole wheat flour, such as Sonora or spelt**  
**2 tablespoons sugar**  
**1 tablespoon baking powder**  
**¾ teaspoon kosher salt**

1. In a bowl, combine the butter, milk, eggs and vanilla and whisk until well-combined. Set aside.

2. In a separate, large mixing bowl, sift together the flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Using a ladle or liquid measure, stir ¼ cup of the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients. Continue to add the liquid, ¼ cup at a time, until you have a thick but pourable batter. Depending on the type of flour, you may not use all of the liquid or may need to add additional milk to get the proper consistency. You should have about 2½ cups of batter.

3. Heat a skillet over medium-high heat with enough butter to liberally coat the pan. Spoon the pancake batter into the hot skillet in any size you like. Cook until the batter bubbles, lifting the side of the pancake to see how done they are: You want a dark golden color. Flip the pancakes and cook until golden brown on the other side. Repeat with the rest of the batter.

Note: From Amy Scattergood

### BROWN SUGAR SYRUP

20 minutes. Makes 2 1/3 cups

**2 cups brown sugar**  
**¾ cup water**  
**Pinch of kosher salt**  
**½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter**

In a medium saucepan, combine the sugar with the water and salt and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until the sugar is completely dissolved, about 5 minutes. Add the butter and stir until melted. Allow to cool slightly before serving.

Note: From Amy Scattergood

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## WASTE

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They say gift buying is an art. I think it is equally skill and art, and one way I hone that skill is to ask myself: Does the person I am buying for really want and need this? Will they value and use it? Am I buying it because I cannot think of anything better or because I just need to get them something? When planning gifts, I prioritize gifts that are: an experience instead of an object (movie tickets or a babysitting coupon for example); durable, reusable and/or help people reduce waste (homemade shopping bags, travel mugs);

and homemade (by me or a community member).

Once you have the gift, some gift-wrapping alternatives can give presents a unique or home-spun feel. Fabric tied with yarn or ribbon is warm and inviting. And when we took a Sunday paper, the colorful comics pages were my favorite homey gift-wrap. Using regular newspaper and magazine pages gives them another life and gift bags can circulate for years. I like putting one gift inside another, too — yummy smelling soap in a pair of fun socks. Of course there is always the option of skipping the wrapping entirely, which is what Santa does at our

house.

Holiday events are another area where you can reduce paper and plastic waste substantially. Disposable cups, plates and dinnerware are tempting but oh so wasteful. I attend a regular potluck where folks are asked to bring (and take home) their own place setting. It works great and no one is left with a huge pile of dishes. Many churches still have a fully supplied cupboard for parties. For home you can pick up a nice set of plates at the thrift store or yard sales at a fraction of their original cost. In my case I got a set for less than the cost of a 100-pack of strong paper plates.

One last way to reduce paper waste is to stop sending cards and using gift tags. I'm not happy with this alternative and am still looking for better options. We have several friends who now send their annual holiday letter by email. I enjoy the updates and pictures, but miss being able to put them up as holiday decorations.

Whatever holidays you celebrate, I hope they are warm, festive, and less wasteful in a way that carries into the new year. My New Year's resolution is to lose weight around my midsection, but for now, I'll focus on reducing the plastic and paper weight I add to our community landfill.

## GLOXINIAS

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• Humidity: 50 percent or more...Pleasantly moist air that circulates freely is the ideal. Use pebble humidity trays in windows and light gardens, or eggcrate plastic grids over trays of water. Cool-vapor humidifiers help any time you are not using the air conditioner.

• Water: Maintain nicely moist at the surface, to slightly on the dry side, but never so dry the leaves remain wilted after midday heat. Never leave gloxinias standing in water more than an hour. Always use water of room temperature or slightly warmer.

• Grooming: Clip off spent

flower stalks at base, also spent, broken or yellow leaves and any browned-off buds.

• Fertilizer: Not the answer if buds are blasting, otherwise treat as African violet or use fish emulsion.

Root gloxinia leaves same as African violet: select firm, medium-size leaf with 1-inch petiole (its stem) to set in moist rooting medium. Cover with glass or plastic. Keep moist, warm, in bright light. The leaf will root, form a tuber and, after a few months, send up a new plant.

After bloom, stop fertilizer, gradually withhold water. Set to rest 2 to 3 months in dark place at 60 to 70F. Add a little water as necessary to keep soil from being bone-dry. To restart, clean tuber and re-pot.

Gloxinia tubers are sold in winter and spring (catalogs, nurseries): Start warm, moist, bright, for blooms all summer/fall. Gloxinia seeds are tiny but mighty. Sow January to February, grow at 70-80 degrees. Buell hybrids highly recommended.

Another source of seeds would be Thompson-Morgan, as they are the go-to people for quality flower seeds and are an old company.

This information is from a gardening class I took in San Diego from Betty Newton (Foothills Community College) in the mid-1980s.

If you have garden questions or comments, please write: [greengardencolumn@yahoo.com](mailto:greengardencolumn@yahoo.com) Thanks for reading!

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