

Tradition and sustenance

Potato latkes is a memorable dish

BY DAVID CAMPICHE

Again, a winter storm came hurling.

We huddled inside our warm kitchen, seeking comfort. As we cooked, we called a distant friend, Hank Langfus. We talked, then finished off the evening with a platter full of potato latkes.

Langfus is the son of Auschwitz concentration camp survivors. In his parents' first days in the U.S., poverty pressed. Potatoes were a meal of practicality based on tradition — potato latkes is regularly eaten during Hanukkah. From potatoes to latkes, the tradition lives on — a message of hope.

Langfus shared his recipe for potato latkes for you to enjoy at home. We paired the dish with homemade crème fraîche and applesauce.

“Latkes on such a rainy night — (they are) Jewish soul food and a Hanukkah specialty. They are guaranteed to chase away human woes,” Langfus said.

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ pounds russet and Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and grated
- ¼ grated onion
- ½ cup flour or Matzo meal
- Four eggs
- 1 tablespoon of sesame seeds
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ½ inch of canola oil

Preparation:

Grate the potatoes. Place the grated potatoes into a colander over another larger bowl. Let them sit. After a few minutes, squeeze out the liquid. Potato starch will accumulate in the bottom of the bowl. Pour off the water and add the starch back into the grated potatoes along with the remaining ingredients, including the grated onion. You want the consistency of a thick pancake batter.

Stir and prepare the latkes for frying. Heat the oil in a non-stick pan and sauté until crisp and golden brown. Hold the cakes in a low heated oven until the batter is used up.

My wife, Laurie Anderson, finished her pancakes with homemade crème fraîche (she combines sour cream and buttermilk, then lets it stand for 24 hours). She served this over applesauce (apple butter works too) and the latkes. Langfus uses sugar, sprinkled over the top. Maple syrup is another tasty addition.



The beauty of leftover latkes is reheating them for breakfast the next morning, served with poached eggs.

On the wild side, I broiled two of the cakes with bleu cheese and a leftover thin slab of salmon. It may sound different but it tasted superb.

For centuries, immigrating peoples have added richness and diversity to our diets. Let us always celebrate this bounty.

Photos by David Campiche

TOP: Potato latkes with sesame beef and Asian salad. **ABOVE:** Latkes and poached eggs make for delicious breakfast leftovers.