

The glorious crepe

Recipe is good for any time of day

BY DAVID CAMPICHE

When I was 21, I was lucky to study in Paris, France. The city was like an apple bulging with mouth-watering opportunity — a thing of beauty that speaks to your good fortune.

Paris is a city of food but the perfection of high cuisine began with Italy through an affair between political forces with the marriage of Catherine de' Medici to King Henry II in the 16th century. The two countries gained stability and France gained great food. De' Medici brought her own chefs and a cornucopia of fine recipes, many of which remain beloved classics centuries later. And therein lies the power of well prepared food.

I met the crepe on these same streets. The French brought us food carts and street food. One of the country's favorites is the crepe, which is sweet or savory and always a pleasure, whether served formally or wrapped in paper. On a spring afternoon

when Paris smells of food, perfume and flowers, one can stop and use a few bucks to buy a crepe redolent with Grand Marnier or brimming with savory treasures.

Back in the U.S., I discovered Uriah Hulsey and his 1960s-style spot, The Columbian Cafe. Like nearly everything he touched, Hulsey mastered the crepe.

In the '70s, my wife, Laurie Anderson, and I began to serve crepes as a breakfast entrée at the Shelburne Hotel.

Here is her recipe. You will need a well-seasoned crepe pan. Modern non-stick crepe pans are also a special tool. Like any omelet, there are many options for fillings. This crepe recipe is lovingly filled with a French favorite: béchamel sauce with ham and herbs. The crepe remains a pleasure to prepare. It may take a few tries to successfully flip the pancake but stick with it and you will be delighted — as will your guests.

Crepe (yields 14 servings)

Crepe batter ingredients

- Four large eggs
- 2 cups milk
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cups water
- 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups unbleached white flour
- 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups buckwheat flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons melted butter

Preparation

Blend all of the above in a mixer for 10 seconds. Stop, scrape down and blend five seconds more. Cover and refrigerate for two to 24 hours.

Gently stir batter. Pre-heat the crepe pan over medium heat. Coat pan lightly with butter. Pour $\frac{3}{8}$ cups of the batter onto a 9-inch or 10-inch crepe pan. Tilt and rotate to coat the entire surface. Cook for one minute, until the shine ends on top and the edges start to brown. Flip, then cook on other side about 15 seconds. Turn the crepes onto a clean towel to cool. Stack the crepes as you finish cooking them. You may wrap them in a towel, then plastic wrap and refrigerate for later use. Reheat individually over a burner or in crepe pan, or as a group wrapped in foil and placed in a warm oven. I recommend to eat them immediately.

Ham béchamel ingredients

- 4 tablespoons of butter
- 4 tablespoons of flour
- 2 cups of milk (one may add a splash



David Campiche

A crepe ready to be served, as a first course or on its own. The crepe is a refreshing offering for breakfast, lunch or dinner.

- of wine)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of heavy cream
- 1 cup of diced ham, quarter-inch in size
- 2 tablespoons of minced parsley
- 1 tablespoon of minced oregano or tarragon, or both
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated gruyere cheese
- A splash of hot sauce (optional)
- Salt to taste

Preparation

Melt the butter and slowly stir in the flour until you have a smooth roux. Just as slowly, stir in the milk until the mixture is

silky and a bit thicker than the consistency of heavy cream. Add the herbs, ham and cheese. Salt. One might substitute a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of white wine for a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of milk.

Pour the ham and béchamel mixture into the center of the crepe shell and roll or fold.

For a savory crepe, sprinkle some of the herbs on top or even some parmesan cheese. Serve immediately. A side of fruit is nice. For a full breakfast, you may wish to sauté some potatoes. A chilled Riesling is the perfect accompaniment.

The Illahee Apartments



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