

# PANCAKES

## Origins

Shrove Tuesday, is traditionally a day for some merry-making - a last 'fling' before the long fast. It is best remembered today with making pancakes. For most people it is just pancake day and nothing more, But the custom arose through the need to use up food items ie eggs and fats, which were forbidden during Lent which begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts 40 days leading up to Easter. On Shrove Tuesday Christians went to confession and were "shriven" (absolved from their sins) - afterwards the Lenten fast could be considered a penance of faults committed. Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, was a solemn occasion, deriving its name from the ancient practice of blessing of the ashes, the priest using the occasion to remind his congregation that they too must return to ashes.

Pancake tradition

## Pancakes

A thin, flat cake, made of batter and baked on a griddle or fried in a pan, the pancake has a very long history and featured in cookbooks as far back as 1439.

Tossing pancakes

Certainly these days part of the fun of cooking pancakes is in the tossing. To toss a pancake successfully takes a combination of the perfect pancake and good technique - it's so easy to get it wrong and end up with half the pancake still stuck to the pan while the other half is stuck to the ceiling or floor. All in all, it's probably best to practise a few times without an audience.

The tradition of tossing or flipping them is almost as old:

"And every man and maide doe take their turne,  
And tosse their Pancakes up for feare they burne."  
(Pasquil's Palin, 1619).

## Pancake Races

In the UK, pancake races also form an important part of the Shrove Tuesday celebrations - an opportunity for large numbers of people to race down the streets tossing pancakes.



## Pancakes around the World

The relative ease of baking on hot stoves or on griddles has resulted in a variety of pancakes around the world.

- ☺ Old English batter was mixed with ale.
- ☺ German and French pancakes, leavened by eggs and much beating, are baked very thin and served with sweet or savoury fillings.
- ☺ The French crêpe is thin and crispy - a crêpe suzette is folded or rolled and heated in a sauce of butter, sugar, citrus juice, and liqueur.
- ☺ Russian blinis, usually prepared with buckwheat, are thin, crisp pancakes, and commonly served with caviar and sour cream or folded over and filled with cream cheese or jam.
- ☺ Mexico has its tortilla, which is often served folded over a bean or meat filling and topped by tomato sauce.
- ☺ American pancakes are thicker. They are sometimes called battercakes, griddlecakes, or flapjacks and are usually leavened with baking powder or baking soda and served with syrup.

Pancakes were, and still are believed to be of good luck in many areas of the world as they contained many herbs and food items associated with the prosperity and longevity. The ingredients symbolise four crucial points of significance at this time of year:

Eggs ~ Creation  
Flour ~ The staff of life  
Salt ~ Wholesomeness  
Milk ~ Purity

## **Mardi Gras**

The French name (literally "fat Tuesday") for Shrove Tuesday has been given to a number of Mardi Gras carnivals around the world. Among the most famous are those of Rio de Janeiro and New Orleans.

## **Record breakers**

“The world's biggest pancake was cooked in Rochdale in 1994”

Pancake tossing is also a very serious pastime for some people - Ralf Laue from Leipzig broke the world record by tossing a pancake 416 times in two minutes and Mike Cuzzacrea ran a marathon while continually tossing a pancake for three hours, two minutes and 27 seconds. The world's biggest pancake was cooked in Rochdale in 1994. It was an amazing 15 metres in diameter, weighed three tonnes and had an estimated two million calories.

## **OLD FASHIONED RHYMES SUNG ON PANCAKE DAY.**

As with a lot of festivals, Shrove Tuesday was used as an excuse for processions around the village, demanding alms from the better-off. In more recent times, the processions were confined mainly to children. In many districts of England the rhymes chanted on these occasions have been preserved, and most of them refer to food.

### **PANCAKE SONG**

Mix a pancake,  
Stir a pancake,  
Pop it in the pan.  
Fry the pancake,  
Toss the pancake,  
Catch it if you can.

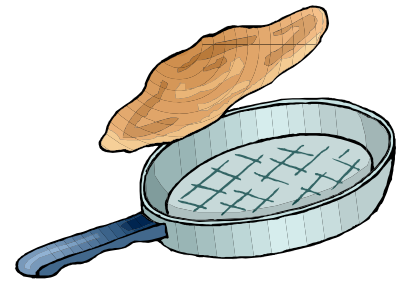
~Christina Rossetti~

### **PANCAKE POEM**

Who wants a pancake,  
Sweet and piping hot?  
Good little Grace looks up and says,  
"I'll take the one on top."  
Who else wants a pancake,  
Fresh off the griddle?  
Terrible Teresa smiles and says,  
"I'll take the one in the middle."

~Shel Siverstien~

## **TRADITIONAL BASIC PANCAKE Recipe.**



### **INGREDIENTS**

8oz 220g	self raising flour
1 pint (500 ml)	milk
2	eggs
pinch	salt
1 1/2oz (40 g)	lard

### **METHOD**

- ☺ Sieve the flour and salt into a basin, making a well in the centre.
- ☺ Break the eggs one at a time and pour into the well.
- ☺ Gradually beat the eggs and flour together, adding the milk little by little until you have a creamy batter.
- ☺ Beat the batter for a few minutes to aerate it (put lots of air bubbles in), and leave to stand for an hour or so if possible.



Heat the frying pan or griddle with a little lard and pour enough batter to cover the area needed. Cook until the top is dry, and then either toss or turn the pancake and cook the other side until brown.

Turn out onto a greaseproof paper, sprinkle with sugar and lemon juice as desired and roll up before serving.