



Pumpkin Pancakes - Wintery, Warm, Fluffy, and Delicious: The Comic/Culinary Mind Of Dave Frees

Our faithful leader, Dave Frees, is a fan of both pancakes and experimenting with food in the kitchen. Here's the result of our interview so that you can enjoy this fall/winter breakfast delight.

Be sure to read the ingredients and preparation instructions carefully to get the full flavor of Dave as he delivers a great recipe AND spoofs food blogs. We had a great time asking him questions and why should we be the only ones to get a kick out of his fanaticism and food preparation OCD?

We're thinking about doing a video of him in the kitchen for the next issue. It's both frightening and hilarious.

INGREDIENTS

1 ½ cups of all-purpose flour Dave assures us that you can use gluten free but that "Cup 4 Cup is the best." and that "lesser brands of gluten free flour should not be considered."

2 tablespoons of sugar (1 light or dark brown and 1 regular white) Dave notes that "if you're really 'off the reservation' you can substitute 1 tablespoon of molasses for the dark brown sugar." But he also told us to warn the reader that "this changes exactly when it's added to the

mixture as "It's now a wet not dry ingredient." He seemed very concerned - for whom we cannot say.

1 ½ teaspoons baking powder He uncharacteristically stops right there. No admonitions, fears or concerns were expressed but there was mention - apparently related to pancakes but not specifically related to this article of some "minor childhood anxiety".

¾ teaspoon baking soda (yes, both baking powder and baking soda) Dave says: "more 'fluff' for the money." We chose not to ask more about this.... for obvious reasons

¾ teaspoon kosher salt Dave says "English flake salt is a 'nice product' as well." We assume that means it can be used. But he made wild huffing sounds and threw his arms up in apparent rage when asked about "Morton's table salt." So, we're guessing that's a hard "No."

1 ½ teaspoons ground cinnamon You guessed it, Ceylon, NOT Saigon cinnamon, "...unless there is some kind of national emergency or a problem I cannot at this time imagine."

1 teaspoon ground ginger His only advice? - "It goes without saying (editor's note: apparently not) that it should not have the name of a supermarket chain printed on the label."

⅛ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg Dave says 2 things here: 1) He assumes "you'll grate it yourself and that you've brought the whole nutmeg back from your last visit to "your place in the Caribbean." and 2) You can replace the cinnamon, ginger, and nutmeg combo with your favorite prepared pumpkin pie spice if you have any left over from Thanksgiving" and he encourages you to "also try real grated ginger for a bigger flavor explosion, if 'you're into that sort of thing'."

1 ½ cups buttermilk He says that "In a pinch" you can use regular milk with a bit of sour cream added OR "Add a squeeze of fresh lemon to your regular organic whole or raw milk delivered to you in glass bottles). He stares at us unblinkingly...and apparently seriously. We then made the mistake of asking if you can use "bottled lemon juice" and we were told not to "ever mention that again", that you - the reader- "would know better", because you - the readers- are "not savages."

¾ cup pumpkin purée Organic if you can get it - because after all you're not "savages."

2 eggs Dave gets his from the coop in his backyard but even he admits that this might be asking too much of you.

3 tablespoons melted butter, plus more for greasing the skillet He uses only Irish Butter - don't ask...we made that mistake.

1 teaspoon vanilla extract Apparently "only Nielsen-Massey Madagascar Vanilla Extract or real vanilla beans" will do. Seriously...who knew. It seemed like such an innocent question. And, by the way, we have it on good authority (we checked) supermarkets will sell you all different kinds and will not ask if you're "making Dave Frees' special pumpkin pancakes recipe?"

Now for Dave describing both the preparation and serving of Pumpkin Pancakes:

PREPARATION

According to Dave, “This step should only be undertaken after appropriate meditation or prayer by all parties involved - including those who will be blessed by partaking in this delight and who will bask in the warm glow of your culinary achievement.”

In particular, Dave mentioned that he provides a blank Moleskine notebook to his breakfast guests to use as a “Gratitude Journal” where they can “jot down tasting notes and parts of their breakfast experience for later and more vivid enjoyment of the memories.” NOTE: We think he’s only kidding about this but one can never be sure. The rest he appears to actually believe.

1. In a large (and he adds “very clean”) bowl, whisk the dry ingredients: flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt and spices together until well combined.
2. In a medium bowl (apparently, since he didn’t mention it this can be clean or dirty), whisk the buttermilk (or the concoctions he advised above if lacking buttermilk), pumpkin purée, eggs, melted butter and vanilla extract until well combined. NOTE: Again, he carries on about the ‘organic puree,’ the ‘Irish butter,’ and the ‘Madagascar’ vanilla extract.” Ok...we get it. The quality of the ingredients matter!
3. Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and gently fold with a rubber spatula until just combined. (Dave uncharacteristically adds: “A few small lumps are O.K.”)
4. Heat a lightly greased cast iron griddle or nonstick skillet over medium-low heat. Drop the pancake batter into the pan by the 1/4 “... making sure to leave plenty of room in between for the batter to expand.” NOTE: We’ll save you some time here. The lecture on the evils of “uneven sizes” and “...vile ‘pancakes’ that have run together through the negligence or a cook/chef’s inferior and unacceptable sense of spatial relation...” took forever. We don’t mind because we’re getting paid but really...you don’t need that kind of stress...it’s the holidays.
5. Cook for a minute or two, until the batter bubbles at the edges and browns on the bottom, then according to Dave “... very carefully but casually and nonchalantly, as though you know what you’re doing...” flip them. If you’re inexperienced at this part and you have guests he suggests practicing before they arrive.
6. Cook for another minute or two, until the batter is completely cooked through and the pancakes are puffy and deep golden brown. Dave assures us, quite graphically, that there is “Nothing worse than expecting to enjoy a perfectly cooked pancake only to find a raw and oozing center. That is the definition of unpleasant. It’s perfectly hideous and should never occur...” Well, you get the idea.
7. Unnecessarily in our view, he added this step: “Repeat until all of the batter is used.” And this one: “Serve the pancakes as you make them or keep the pancakes warm as you cook them by setting them on a baking sheet in a 250-degree oven.”

Really? Serve them while warm? Surprisingly he doesn't tell you to "serve them on a plate" or something obvious like that.

Oh sorry. We just received the following "Brief little follow up" by email: "I think we should suggest to the reader that these exceptional fall and winter pancakes deserve a special presentation. I suggest serving them on a plate larger than the plates on which the guest will be dining AND with some complimentary but contrasting color." So basically, he did add that we should serve them on a plate.

In closing, we hope that you enjoyed Dave's commitment to an exceptional winter breakfast or brunch as much as we did. Really, he's just being silly but those pancakes are amazing.

Let us know what you think. email your questions and comments to dfrees@utbf.com or lsnyder@utbf.com