

Pancake Day is on a different date every year and is a celebration unique to the UK. Read the text and find out why British people celebrate with pancakes.

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. to fast
2. rich
3. a sin
4. a confession
5. to toss
6. to flip
7. a topping
8. to whisk

Definition

- a. to turn something over from one side to the other
- b. something you put on top of food, for example a sauce on top of ice cream
- c. something bad you have done
- d. to mix a liquid very fast so that lots of air gets inside it
- e. containing a lot of butter, cream or other fat
- f. the 'telling' of a bad thing you've done
- g. to not eat or drink for a period of time
- h. to throw up and down in the air

Pancake Day

Americans are often surprised to hear that British people have a special day in celebration of pancakes. After all, American pancakes are a typical breakfast or brunch meal. However, pancakes in the UK are much thinner than American pancakes because they don't use baking powder, so they are not fat and fluffy and, instead, are more like French crepes.

Why pancakes?

Pancake Day is actually another name for Shrove Tuesday, which takes place 40 days before Easter Sunday and marks the start of Lent. In some other countries this day is called Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday, because it's when people ate all the good things for the last time before starting 40 days of religious fasting for Lent. Milk, eggs and oil or butter might not seem special nowadays, but hundreds of years ago they were one of the few ways of turning a basic recipe of flour and water into something richer.

The pancake bell

As well as using all their eggs and fats before Lent, people would also go to church to confess their sins to a priest. A bell used to ring at about 11 o'clock in the morning to remind people to cook their luxury ingredients and go to confession. This bell became known as the pancake

bell. In Olney in Buckinghamshire, the town celebrates with a tradition that started in 1445 when a woman heard the bell while she was making pancakes. She ran out of the house to get to church in time for confession while she was still holding the hot pan with the pancake inside. As she ran, she tossed the pancake to flip it over and over again so that it wouldn't burn. Today, in Olney and some other towns across the UK, pancake races are held, where the racers all run and toss pancakes down the street.

Pancake Day in numbers

On average, British people eat two pancakes per person on Pancake Day (though plenty of people will have three or four at least) which means 117 million pancakes will be eaten in one day. On a normal day, Brits eat 30 million eggs per day, but on Pancake Day that goes up to 52 million eggs and enough milk to fill more than 93 Olympic swimming pools. While some people might put chocolate spread or syrup on their pancakes, the most popular topping, by far, is lemon juice and sugar. But instead of the fine white sugar you put on top of cakes, British people use the same kind of sugar they put in their tea. If you want to try making British-style pancakes today, here's a simple recipe:

Recipe

To make about 12 pancakes you need:

- 100g plain flour
- 2 large eggs
- 300ml milk
- 15ml of oil, plus extra for frying
- a pinch of salt

1. Put the flour, milk, oil and pinch of salt into a bowl. Whisk them together, then add the eggs and whisk again until you have a smooth liquid called batter.
2. Leave the batter to rest for 30 minutes if you have time.
3. Put a medium-size frying pan over medium heat and put a little oil in the pan.
4. When the oil is hot, pour a large spoonful of batter into the pan and move the pan so that the batter covers the bottom of the pan.
5. Cook the pancakes for one minute on each side until they are golden.
6. Serve the pancakes warm with the topping you like best.

Tasks

Task 1

Write numbers to put the instructions in order.

- _____ Add the eggs to the mixture and whisk into a smooth batter.
- _____ Pour a spoonful of batter into the pan and help it spread.
- _____ Serve the pancake warm and add a topping.
- _____ Flip the pancake and then cook it for one more minute.
- _____ Mix the flour, milk, oil and a little salt.
- _____ Cook the pancake for one minute.
- _____ Heat a little oil in a pan over medium heat until it is hot.

Task 2

Use the words to complete the sentences.

breakfast	chocolate spread	Easter	French crepes
lemon and sugar	22	93	117

British pancakes have more in common with (1) than thick American pancakes and they are not eaten for (2) Instead they form part of a tradition which takes place 40 days before (3) (4) million pancakes are eaten, which requires (5) million more eggs than on any other day of the year and an amount of milk that could fill (6) large pools. Although a lot of people like (7) on top of their pancakes, most people prefer (8)

Discussion

What is the best pancake topping?

Answers

Preparation task

1. g
2. e
3. c
4. f
5. h
6. a
7. b
8. d

Task 1

- 2 Add the eggs to the mixture and whisk into a smooth batter.
- 4 Pour a spoonful of batter into the pan and help it spread.
- 7 Serve the pancake warm and add a topping.
- 6 Flip the pancake and then cook it for one more minute.
- 1 Mix the flour, milk, oil and a little salt.
- 5 Cook the pancake for one minute.
- 3 Heat a little oil in a pan over medium heat until it is hot.

Task 2

1. French crepes
2. breakfast
3. Easter
4. 117
5. 22
6. 93
7. chocolate spread
8. lemon and sugar