

SHRIMP CRÊPES

Makes about 18

By Dennis W. Viau; an original recipe.

Crêpes are easy and fun to make. I came up with this recipe when a friend asked me to teach him to make crêpes. Crêpes are very versatile. You can fill them with all sorts of savory or sweet stuffings and cover them with different sauces. In fact, you can do more with a crêpe than the Spanish can do with a tortilla.



Ingredients:

For the crêpe batter:

4 large eggs (mine are 1.9 to 2 ounces each, or 54 to 57g)

½ teaspoon salt

1 cup (237ml) cold water

1 cup (237ml) cold milk

4 tablespoons (¼ cup/59ml) melted butter

1½ cups (8 ounces/227g) all purpose flour

For the béchamel:

4 tablespoons butter

4 tablespoons flour

½ teaspoon white pepper

½ teaspoon ground nutmeg (fresh ground is best)

4 cups (946ml) milk

For the filling:

2 tablespoons butter

1 medium to large clove garlic; minced

2 pounds (900g) fresh shrimp; shelled, de-veined, and chopped

Directions:

The crêpe batter needs to be made well in advance, at least two hours, to allow the flour particles to absorb moisture and for the air in the batter to rise and bubble out. Break the eggs into a large bowl and add the salt. Whisk until blended. Add the water and milk. Blend with the whisk. Add the melted butter while whisking. Finally, add the flour, blend well, whipping for 5 minutes to remove any lumps of flour that might be in the batter. Cover and set aside for at least two hours.

To make the béchamel, melt the butter in a saucepan and add the flour. Cook only about 1 minute over low heat. Let cool until only warm to the touch. Add the pepper and nutmeg. Blend. Add the milk and blend over medium heat, bringing to a boil. Reduce heat to low and stir constantly for 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and carefully press a piece of plastic wrap onto the surface to help prevent the béchamel from developing a skin.

Lightly butter the inside of a small 7-inch skillet and heat over medium heat. Pour ¼ cup (60ml) of the crêpe batter into the pan, tilting the pan to swirl the batter evenly around the bottom. Cook until the crêpe starts to brown around the edges, 1 to 2 minutes, and then flip over. Cook another minute and then move the crêpe from the pan to a dish. Continue until all the crêpes are cooked. Cover with plastic wrap and set aside.

Heat 2 tablespoons butter in a large skillet and add the minced garlic. Cook a few seconds and add the chopped shrimp. Sauté until the shrimp changes color, about a minute or two, and remove from the heat.

★★★★★

Allow to cool until comfortable to handle.

Stir about ½ cup (120ml) béchamel into the shrimp to coat it well. Spoon about 2 heaping tablespoons of shrimp onto the less pretty side of a crêpe, arranging the filling along one end. Roll the crêpe to enclose the filling and place in a large baking pan (large enough to hold all 18, or use two small baking pans).

Spoon some the béchamel over the crêpes, reserving about half for garnish at the table. Bake the crêpes in a 375°F (190°C) oven for 20 to 25 minutes to heat through. Heat the remaining béchamel. Place 2 or 3 heated crêpes on a plate, garnish with béchamel, and serve hot.

STEP-BY-STEP

1



The ingredients are simple enough. Missing here is the shrimp. While the crêpe batter was resting, I went to the store to buy the shrimp. The amounts shown here are different because I'm making half a batch.

2



Whisk the eggs and salt together until well blended. Add the water and milk. Blend. Whisk while adding the melted butter and blend well. Add the flour and mix thoroughly, making sure there are no lumps of flour in the batter. Cover with plastic and set aside for at least 2 hours. You can make this the evening before for convenience. The mixture will look watery, but the flour will absorb moisture, improving the texture. Allowing the batter to rest will also allow trapped air bubbles to escape.

3



I darkened this photograph to make the air bubbles more visible. This batter has been sitting for a while. The bubbles on the surface are not from leavening; these are escaping the batter. Allowing the air to escape will improve the texture of the finished crêpes.

4



While the batter is resting, make the béchamel. Melt the butter in a saucepan over medium heat and add the flour. Reduce the heat to low and cook the flour only about a minute.

5



The flour should be cooked only long enough to remove the raw flavor, not enough to change color. This is referred to as a white roux and is the basis for making a white sauce. Let cool until only warm to the touch. Add the pepper and nutmeg. Blend well.

6



Add the milk and stir to blend. Heat over medium heat until the mixture starts to boil. Reduce the heat to low and stir constantly for 10 minutes while the sauce cooks and thickens. It doesn't need to boil. The temperature can be held just below the boiling point to cook this sauce slowly. Notice the two pictures above. When the sauce starts cooking it will be watery and run off the spatula. After ten minutes it will have a silky texture that leaves a thin coating. This is referred to as the "coats a spoon" stage. This is an ideal béchamel.

Here's a trick: The béchamel can scorch easily. Not only do I stir it constantly, scraping the bottom with a spatula, I stack one of the stove grates (or hobs) on top of another, raising the pan further above the flame. This reduces the risk of scorching.

7



Hot béchamel will develop a skin on its surface quickly. To help prevent this, carefully press a piece of plastic wrap onto the surface of the sauce. Set aside while you cook the crêpes.

8



To make a 7-inch crêpe, pour $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60ml) of batter into a heated skillet, tilting to swirl the batter around the bottom of the skillet, making a complete circle. This might take a little practice. Cook over medium heat until it starts to brown around the edges, a minute or two, and then flip over. Cook another minute and then move the crêpe to a dish. Continue until all the crêpes are done.

9



Here are a couple of my crêpes. The side showing is the bottom, or the part that would be inside. The better looking side is underneath. As Julia Child said, this side is not for public viewing. You would place the filling on this side, and then roll it up to display the better looking side.

10



Melt the butter in a skillet and add the minced garlic. Cook the chopped shrimp only until it changes color. Do not over-cook, as this will make the meat rubbery. Shrimp cook quickly, about a minute or two. Remove from the heat and let cool, then add about ½ cup (120ml) of the béchamel. Stir to coat.

11

For comparison sake, here are two of my crêpes. The one of the left shows the outside. This is the part you want your guests to see.

12

Place a small amount, maybe 2 heaping tablespoons, of the filling on the inside of a crêpe, toward one side. Roll up the crêpe and place in a baking pan that is large enough to contain all the crêpes.

Meanwhile, be heating the oven to 375°F (190°C).

13

Before placing the crêpes in the heated oven, coat with about half the béchamel. Heat 20 to 25 minutes, until heated through.

Meanwhile, warm your remaining béchamel for serving.

14

Place 2 or 3 crêpes on a plate, coat with heated béchamel, and serve immediately. These need no further garnish than the sauce.

Conclusion

There is a lot to be said for crêpes. They are simple to make, and made with simple ingredients. They can be used to enclose almost any filling. Made with a little sugar, they are often used for desserts. They are both common and refined. Who could forget a thrilling flaming Crêpes Suzette? Learn how to make crêpes and you will have at your fingertips the beginnings of a vast array of delicious food possibilities.