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Crisp apple cider adds flavor boost to pancakes, perfect for fall

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Apple Cider Pancakes Photos Susie Iventosch

It's definitely apple season, and with that comes delicious apple cider. One of my favorite childhood memories is my mom giving us powdered sugar donuts and fresh local apple cider for after school snacks during the fall. She was that mom who always made us breakfast . every single day, and always had fun and exciting snacks waiting for us after our walk home from the school bus. Those are such fond memories! To this day, even though I rarely eat donuts, if I had to pick one after school treat, it would be those powdered sugar donuts and apple cider.

Apple cider and apple juice are not the same thing. In fact, they both start with apples, but where cider is generally pure 100% raw, unpasteurized and unfiltered juice, (and therefore more seasonal), apple juice is mostly made from a concentrate. The water content along with the natural pectin and fibers are filtered out during the concentration process, with the result being

less nutritional value as well as less flavor. Then to make juice, the water is added back to the concentrate often along with artificial flavors and coloring, corn syrup and preservatives. Natural unfiltered apple juice is more or less the same thing as apple cider, and will have a more intense apple flavor, like cider. If you cannot find apple cider, try to find natural, unfiltered apple juice and if you cannot find that, you can use apple juice, but add some puréed or finely diced apple to the pancake batter to give a flavor boost.

I recently guided a bicycle tour in Northern Idaho and one of the inns where we stayed specializes in apple cider pancakes. They really were delicious, and, naturally, I decided to try them at home. Instead of the apple glaze they served, I opted to caramelize apples in brown sugar, butter and apple juice, and spoon that over the top of the pancakes. It was delicious and the flavor reminded me of a good tarte tatin - the quintessential French caramelized apple pie! As the apples cook down and caramelize in the butter and brown sugar, it creates a syrupy sauce that can be drizzled over the pancakes in place of syrup.

Apple Cider Pancakes

(Serves 4)

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
 4 tsp. baking powder
 2 tbsp. light brown sugar
 1/4 tsp. salt, or more to taste
 1/4 tsp. cinnamon
 1/4 tsp. cardamom
 1 1/4 cups apple cider (or unfiltered natural apple juice)
 3 tablespoons melted butter, or canola oil

1 egg
 1 tsp. vanilla
 1 tsp. cider vinegar

Topping

2 medium apples (I use Honeycrisp), core removed and cut into small bite-sized chunks. (Keep skins on the apples for color, flavor and nutritional value.)

4 tbsp. brown sugar
 2 tbsp. butter
 1/4+ cup apple cider

DIRECTIONS

In a medium mixing bowl, combine flour, baking powder, salt, cinnamon and cardamom. Blend well with a whisk or fork. Set aside.

In another smaller bowl, blend apple cider, egg, brown sugar, melted butter or oil, vanilla and cider vinegar. Whisk until blended. Stir these liquids into the dries and blend until incorporated. Batter will thicken as it sits. (If you add puréed or finely diced apple, add it to the liquid ingredients before blending the batter.)

Meanwhile, melt butter for caramelized apples in a large skillet. Add brown sugar and stir until bubbly. Pour apple chunks into the skillet and cook over low heat for approximate 25 minutes, stirring occasionally, until apples are caramelized. Add 1/4 cup apple cider and cook down until reduced to the thickness of syrup.

Once the caramelized apples are ready, heat oil or butter in batches in another skillet. Cook pancakes until golden brown. Serve hot with a big spoonful of caramelized apples and the apple reduction sauce. A dollop of whipped cream or whipped cream yogurt would also be delightful on top of each pancake.





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