



COOKING LESSONS FROM THE KITCHN

# How To Make Impossibly Fluffy Japanese-Style Pancakes

by GRACE ELKUS





*(Image credit: Joe Lingeman)*



pancakes, the fluffier the better. So when I began seeing photos of impossibly fluffy, soufflé-like Japanese pancakes all over social media, I knew I had to figure out how to make them at home. After a bit of experimenting and a lot of syrup consumption, I came up with a foolproof recipe. Here's how to do it.

## Why Should I Make Japanese-Style Pancakes?

These lofty pancakes are served all over Japan — at breakfast spots like [Gram Cafe](#) and [Flippers](#) — but they're not nearly as common on menus Stateside. In lieu of a flight to Tokyo, I've come up with a way to get a taste of them at home.

These pancakes are a fun cooking project that yields a legitimately delicious result (and a great pic for Instagram). They're like an extra-light, soufflé-like version of buttery, vanilla-scented [buttermilk pancakes](#) — and aren't much more difficult to make. Make them with your kids, or use them to impress your friends.

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*(Image credit: Joe Lingeman)*

## What Makes Japanese-Style Pancakes So Fluffy?

There are two major steps that distinguish Japanese pancakes from American pancakes: **folding in whipped egg whites, and cooking them in ring molds.**

Beating four egg whites to stiff peaks and then folding them into a buttermilk batter (made with baking powder and baking soda, so there's a lot of leavening power going on here) makes for a soufflé-like batter that rises as it cooks. It's thick enough that you'll be spooning it, rather than pouring it, into the pan.

To help them hold their shape as they cook, you need a set of ring molds. My attempt to make these without a mold — by scooping tall mounds of batter directly into the skillet — yielded messy, unpredictable results: the batter immediately began to spread, and they cooked unevenly due to their lumpy, irregular shape.



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The ring molds — I used 3-inch-wide by 2-3/4-inch-high molds, although you could use shorter ones and make shorter pancakes — allow the batter to puff up as it cooks, and give the pancakes a more uniform shape.







*(Image credit: Joe Lingeman)*



- 1. Use room-temperature buttermilk.** Cold buttermilk will cause the melted butter in the batter to solidify.
- 2. Don't over-fill the molds.** After generously coating them with cooking spray (you don't want your pancakes to get stuck!), you'll pour your batter into the molds. Fill them each slightly less than halfway full — the batter will rise almost to the top as it cooks.
- 3. Cover the skillet with a folded tea towel.** You're cooking these pancakes low and slow to give them time to rise. Covering the pan with a towel traps the heat inside, essentially steaming these pancakes for the lightest, fluffiest texture.
- 4. Don't flip too soon.** Wait until bubbles have formed on the tops of the pancakes and the center just barely jiggles before firmly grasping the molds with tongs and quickly flipping them over. Flip too soon, and the uncooked batter will ooze out into the pan. Giving the batter enough time to set before flipping also allows the bottom to get nicely golden-brown and crisp.

## How Do I Serve Japanese-Style Pancakes?

You'll be able to fit four molds in a large nonstick skillet, meaning you can make four pancakes in one go-around. These hold their shape surprisingly well (they won't immediately deflate), so if you're serving four and want everyone to eat at once, place the first batch on a cooling rack set inside a rimmed baking sheet and keep them warm in a 225°F oven as you cook the remaining four pancakes. Then serve stacks of two with butter, maple syrup, and fresh berries.

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(Image credit: [Joe Lingeman](#))

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## Japanese Pancakes

### MAKES

8 pancakes

### SERVES

4

### PREP TIME:

20 minutes

### COOKING TIME:

20 minutes to 25 minutes

## INGREDIENTS

- ☐ 4 large egg whites
- ☐ 2 large egg yolks
- ☐ 1 1/4 cups low-fat or full-fat buttermilk, at room temperature
- ☐ 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly, plus more for serving
- ☐ 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ☐ 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- ☐ 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- ☐ 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt



- ☐ 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- ☐ Cooking spray for the molds and the pan
- ☐ Maple syrup and fresh berries, for serving

## EQUIPMENT

- ☐ Stand mixer or electric hand mixer
- ☐ Large bowl
- ☐
- ☐ Large nonstick skillet with lid
- ☐ 4 (3-inch-wide by 2-3/4-inch-high) ring molds
- ☐
- ☐ Small offset spatula or butter knife

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Beat the egg whites to stiff peaks.** Place the egg whites in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. (Alternatively, use an electric hand mixer and large bowl.) Beat on medium-low speed until frothy. Increase the speed to high and beat until stiff peaks form, 1 to 2 minutes more. Place the bowl in the refrigerator while you prepare the rest of the batter.
- 2. Whisk the wet ingredients together.** Whisk the egg yolks, buttermilk, butter, and vanilla together in a large bowl.
- 3. Add the dry ingredients.** Add the flour, sugar, salt, baking powder, and baking soda and whisk until just combined (a few lumps are okay).
- 4. Fold in the beaten egg whites.** Remove the beaten egg whites from the refrigerator. Using a rubber spatula, gently fold them into the pancake batter in three additions.



- 5. Prepare the pan and ring molds.** Coat a large nonstick skillet with cooking spray and heat over medium-low. Coat the insides of the ring molds with cooking spray and space them evenly apart in the skillet.
- 6. Spoon in the batter.** Spoon the pancake batter into each of the ring molds so that it fills them each slightly less than halfway full (you'll use a scant 1/2 cup of batter in each).
- 7. Cover the skillet with a towel.** Carefully cover the skillet with a clean kitchen towel (the towel shouldn't touch the bottom of the pan or hang over the edges) and place the lid over the towel (if you have a gas stove, be careful that the towel is not near the flame).
- 8. Cook the pancakes 13 to 15 minutes.** Cook, covered, until the batter has risen, bubbles have formed, edges appear dry, and the center just barely jiggles, 13 to 15 minutes.
- 9. Flip the pancakes.** Working one ring mold at a time, grasp with tongs and quickly flip the mold. Carefully run a small offset spatula or butter knife around the inside of each mold to loosen the pancake, then gently push the pancake down the mold so that the bottom is in contact with the pan. Continue cooking, uncovered, until pancakes are set, about 3 to 4 minutes more.
- 10. Release the pancakes.** Remove the skillet from the heat. Carefully run a small offset spatula or butter knife around the inside of each mold to release the pancakes again, then carefully remove the mold. Wipe the molds clean, coat with cooking spray, and repeat process with remaining batter.
- 11. Serve.** Serve pancakes with butter, maple syrup, and berries.

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