



100 Percent Whole-Wheat Pancakes

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 16: A Hearty Start to the Day

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

Most recipes for whole-wheat pancakes call for a mix of white and whole-wheat flours, and they also call for extra flavorings like spices, vanilla, fruit juice, or fruit. Why not just whole-wheat flour? We discovered that using all whole-wheat flour actually delivers light, fluffy, and tender pancakes—not the dense cakes you’d imagine—because whole-wheat flour contains slightly less gluten-forming protein than white flour and because the bran in whole-wheat flour cuts through any gluten strands that do form. Recipes for pancakes made with white flour advise undermixing to limit gluten development and thus avoid dense, tough pancakes, but with whole-wheat flour, gluten isn’t an issue, which all but guarantees light and tender cakes. And we didn’t see the need to cover up whole wheat’s natural flavor, the perfect complement to maple syrup, with other add-ins. As long as we used a bag of fresh or properly stored (in the freezer) whole-wheat flour, it had just the buttery, nutty flavor we wanted.

Makes 15 pancakes

An electric griddle set at 350 degrees can be used in place of a skillet. If substituting buttermilk powder and water for fresh buttermilk, use only 2 cups of water to prevent the pancakes from being too wet. To ensure the best flavor, use either recently purchased whole-wheat flour or flour that has been stored in the freezer for less than 12 months. Serve with maple syrup and butter.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups (11 ounces) whole-wheat flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 1/4 cups buttermilk
- 5 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 2 large eggs

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 200 degrees. Spray wire rack set in rimmed baking sheet with vegetable oil spray; place in oven.
2. Whisk flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together in medium bowl. Whisk buttermilk, 5 tablespoons oil, and eggs together in second medium bowl. Make well in center of flour mixture and pour in buttermilk mixture; whisk until smooth. (Mixture will be thick; do not add more buttermilk.)
3. Heat 1 teaspoon oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Using paper towels, carefully wipe out oil, leaving thin film on bottom and sides of pan. Using 1/4-cup dry measuring cup or 2-ounce ladle, portion batter into pan in 3 places. Gently spread each portion into 4 1/2-inch round. Cook until edges are set, first side is golden brown, and bubbles on surface are just beginning to break, 2 to 3 minutes. Using thin, wide spatula, flip pancakes and continue to cook until second side is golden brown, 1 to 2 minutes longer. Serve pancakes immediately or transfer to wire rack in oven. Repeat with remaining batter, using remaining 1

teaspoon oil as necessary.

TECHNIQUE

GO AHEAD: BEAT THE HECK OUT OF THIS BATTER

Recipes for white-flour pancakes always warn against overmixing. That's because it will create a strong, restrictive gluten network, and that makes for tough, dense cakes. But we discovered that the same rule doesn't apply to pancakes made with whole-wheat flour for two reasons. The first is that cup for cup, whole-wheat flour has fewer gluten-forming proteins than white flour. Second, whole-wheat flour contains bran, which is sharp and will cut through gluten strands that do form. When the gluten strands are shorter, the gluten network is weakened and the pancakes become even more tender.

WHITE-FLOUR PANCAKES

25 stirs



100 stirs



WHOLE-WHEAT-FLOUR PANCAKES

25 stirs



100 stirs



TECHNIQUE

FOR THE SWEETEST WHEAT, USE FRESH FLOUR . . . OR GRIND YOUR OWN

The little bits of bran and germ in whole-wheat flour are a nutritional boon, but they're also a storage liability because they contain fats that are vulnerable to oxidation. If unchecked, this oxidation can give the flour a bitter taste. For the best flavor, we recommend starting with a freshly opened bag or one that you've stored in the freezer (where whole-wheat flour keeps well for up to a year). Or you can take it to the next level and grind your own grain. Sound hard-core? We thought so, too, until we tried it. The method is simple: Pulverize wheat berries (which are simply dried wheat kernels and widely available in the bulk section of supermarkets), sugar, and salt in a blender and then add liquid (we use buttermilk); keep blending and then add the rest of the pancake ingredients to create a batter that you can pour directly from the blender jar into the skillet. The whole process barely takes 5 minutes, and the result is the sweetest, nuttiest-tasting whole-wheat pancake you've ever experienced.

After testing this recipe in a range of blenders, we found that a machine with a 450-watt motor and ice-crushing capability is essential.



