



CLASSIC PUFF DADDY

Maybe you've heard some people call this a Dutch baby, and others a German pancake. As the story goes, the young daughter of a German restaurateur in Seattle couldn't pronounce the word "*Deutsch*" (which actually means "German"!) and instead said "Dutch." The restaurant served individual-size pancakes, calling them "babies." Hence, Dutch baby. You can use the same basic recipe to make Dutch babies, using tiny frying pans, if you have them. Or, make a giant one, as we do here, and call it what you like! Our name of choice? Puff Daddy.

This pancake is traditionally served for breakfast or brunch, but it's equally good for dessert or with dinner. It has lots of cousins—or siblings, more like: think popover, Yorkshire pudding, or even cream puffs. The variations depend mostly on the vessel you cook it in and what you serve it with. It can be served simply with a squeeze of fresh lemon and sprinkle of powdered sugar—like its cousin, the crepe, which is as flat as this daddy is puffy!—and fresh berries, or with whatever genius toppings you can dream of. (Ice cream, anyone?)

The recipe illustrates a key (*Serious*) *New Cook* principle: Understand the inherently experimental nature of baking. You can read a hundred different recipes that claim their exact technique or exact ratio of eggs to milk to flour will yield the puffiest pancake. This makes sense, since baking is a real science—or maybe it's more of an art . . . we can never decide. Or maybe it's a science, but when we don't exactly KNOW the science, we call it art.

At any rate, what most recipes don't tell you is that every tweak has an effect, including subtle variations in pan shapes, sizes, and materials, the exact size of your eggs, the temperature of the raw ingredients, the size and type of your salt granules, the precise amount of flour, the way your oven heats up, and so forth. Puff Daddies are perfect examples. Using really big eggs and cooking the daddy a little less can yield a more tender, more luscious pancake interior, while a couple extra minutes (or slightly smaller eggs) can yield a more impressive puff height. If you're serving it with maple syrup or loads of berries and powdered sugar, maybe achieving a gravity-defying puff is most important to you. But if a silky interior sounds more satisfying, it might be worth

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Serves 2 to 4

For a gluten-free version, use white rice flour

Equipment: Your choice of oven-safe baking vessel, such as a 10-inch cast-iron skillet, a small roasting pan, a stainless-steel sauté pan, a glass or ceramic baking dish, five or six ramekins, or even a muffin tin. If you use a pan that is 12 inches or more in diameter, you might consider increasing the quantities of all the ingredients in this recipe by one third.

Optional Prep

The batter can be made in advance and kept in the refrigerator for a few hours or even overnight. In fact, letting it rest for a few hours improves the Puff Daddy's texture and can increase its height. Just make the batter without the butter and refrigerate, covered, right in the blender jar. When you are ready to bake it, melt the butter in the pan, add half to the batter, and reblend before pouring and baking it. Note that cold batter will require extra baking time, so keep a close eye on it. If you want to reduce that baking time and improve the height even further, warm the blender jar of cold batter in a pan of hot tap water before pouring it into the buttered pan.

Tips

Ingredient temperatures affect baking considerably. Just imagine the difference between starting with eggs and milk straight out of the fridge at 40°F compared to room temperature at around 70°F or slightly warmed at around 90°F. Baking times will increase or decrease dramatically, and in a recipe like this, the particular puffiness or crispiness or egginess can be affected as well. When we have time, we use the standard professional pastry chef approach and warm our eggs and milk first. This allows all of the ingredients to bond together more easily, resulting in more uniformly textured baked goods. In a Puff Daddy that usually means it will rise a little taller, too. It's easy enough and is good practice, particularly if you want a consistent result. But the truth is, when we're hungry or in a hurry, we sometimes use them cold, and not many people can tell the difference. If you're up for a tiny bit of extra effort, warm your milk for a few minutes by placing it in a glass measuring cup in a pan of hot water, along with your eggs—and see if you can notice the difference! Also try experimenting—(*Serious*) *New Cook* Principle #3—with oven temperatures. Some cooks start with a blazing hot oven, while others start with a cold one, believe it or not. We lean toward cold, in this case, but the outcome depends on how fast your oven heats up, so . . . experiment!

Here's a trick to the perfect powdered sugar sprinkle. Put the sugar in a sifter or a fine-mesh strainer and "dust it" onto the pancake by tapping the side of the sifter with your hand as the sugar "snows" down beautifully.

sacrificing a tiny bit of height. Using little ramekins yields fun results, too (see the third recipe in this Puff Daddy trio!)—kind of like a popover or even a bit like a cream puff.

When it comes down to it, after testing and tweaking our recipe countless times over the years, we realized that you can get an impressive result with a remarkably wide variety of approaches. This is what works best for us. Try it once, develop your own theory for what's working best and least given the specifics of your own kitchen and your own ingredients, then tweak the recipe just a tad and try again the next weekend! (Or, better yet, try it once for breakfast, then later for dessert!)

The bottom line: This is a really easy, really fun recipe that cooks up a treat as impressive as it is delicious. So, it follows two more (*Serious*) *New Cook* Principles: Have fun and share!

INGREDIENTS

Butter, 4 tablespoons unsalted (if you only have salted, reduce the salt to just a pinch)

Whole milk, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup, slightly warmed (15 seconds in the microwave or a few minutes sitting in a measuring cup in a pan of hot water will do the trick)

All-purpose flour, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white rice flour, preferably superfine)

Sugar, 1 tablespoon (if you're going the savory route, feel free to reduce or skip the sugar)

Salt, 1 teaspoon

Eggs, 3 large, at room temperature (warming briefly in a bowl or pan of hot tap water—perhaps alongside the milk—works well)

Your favorite toppings: lemon juice and powdered sugar, fresh berries, Any Berry Compote (page 53), chocolate-hazelnut spread and bananas, ice cream, a fried egg, ham and cheese, a salad, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera



1 Prep: Preheat your oven to 400°F. (And if it hasn't come all the way up to temperature by the time the batter is ready, that's okay!) Then, on the stovetop over medium heat, melt the butter in the pan you will bake the pancake in, swirling to coat the bottom and sides. Remove the pan from the heat and start the batter. (If you're using a baking dish or ramekin, pour the melted butter into it and swirl to coat.)



2 Make the batter: Spoon out 2 tablespoons of the melted butter and put it into a blender. Then add the milk, flour, sugar, salt, and eggs (in that order, to reduce the amount of flour that gets stuck to the blender cup) and pulse a few times, until nearly smooth. Scrape down the sides to make sure all of the dry ingredients have a chance to blend in, and pulse a few more times. The batter should be thin, frothy, and free of lumps. Alternatively, you can whisk together the ingredients by hand in a large bowl.



3 Pour the batter and start baking: Pour the batter into the buttered pan and place it in the oven (even if it hasn't preheated all the way). Resist opening the door to peek for at least 15 minutes (10, if you're using small pans or ramekins).



4 Finish baking: Remove from the oven when the puff daddy is super puffy and golden brown all over, 15 to 25 minutes total, depending on your pan and your oven. If you're going for maximum height, let it get nice and brown; if tender deliciousness is your goal, a light golden brown is better. Top as desired and serve immediately.



CARAMELIZED APPLE PUFF DADDY

This is what you'd get if a Puff Daddy had a baby with a tarte tatin. In other words, it's dessert you can pass off as breakfast. (Unless you add a scoop of vanilla ice cream. Then let's just agree it really is dessert, okay?) Like a classic tarte tatin, the apples are caramelized in butter and sugar before the crust—or, in this case, the Puff Daddy batter—is added to the pan. It bakes up looking rather like a regular Puff Daddy, but as soon as it's done, you flip it upside down onto a plate, which deflates it but allows the caramelized apples to shine. Literally. It's lovely on its own, but our favorite way to serve it is with a dollop of Greek yogurt or with some yogurt whipped cream, which balances out the sweetness of the caramelized apples by bringing out their natural tartness.

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Serves 2 to 4

For a gluten-free version, use white rice flour

Time: 45 minutes, though if you have a really hungry crew that can't wait the extra 15 to 20 minutes it takes to caramelize the apples first, you can cheat by making the plain version of the Classic Puff Daddy (page 45), and while it's baking, caramelize the apples in the butter and sugar, then spoon it all over the top of the Puff Daddy.

Equipment: A heavy-bottomed, oven-safe 8- to 10-inch skillet

INGREDIENTS

Butter, 5 tablespoons unsalted (if you only have salted, reduce the salt to just a pinch)

Apples, 2 or 3 large (preferably a firm, tart variety like Pink Lady or Granny Smith), peeled and cut into ½-inch-thick slices

Sugar, ½ to ⅔ cup (depending on how sweet or tart your apples are and how strong your sweet tooth is)

Salt, 1 teaspoon plus a pinch

Whole milk, ¾ cup, slightly warmed (15 seconds in the microwave or a few minutes sitting in a measuring cup in a pan of hot water will do the trick)

All-purpose flour, ¾ cup

Eggs, 3 large, at room temperature (warming briefly in a bowl or pan of hot tap water—perhaps alongside the milk—works well)

1 Caramelize the apples: Melt the butter in your skillet over medium-high heat. Then, add the apples, sugar, and a pinch of salt, stirring constantly as the sugar dissolves and the apples begin to release their juices. Continue cooking, stirring frequently, until the apples become soft and translucent, 15 to 20 minutes, depending on your apple variety (see Tips). The consistency of the caramel will change throughout the cooking process. Ultimately, you want it to become a thick, golden-brown syrup. If it gets thicker than that, add a squeeze of lemon juice or a splash of water to loosen it up. Remove from the heat.

2 Make the batter: Preheat your oven to 400°F. (And if it hasn't come all the way up to temperature by the time the batter is ready, that's okay!) Then, into a blender, put the milk, flour, remaining 1 teaspoon salt, and eggs (in that order, to reduce the amount of flour that gets stuck to the blender cup), and pulse a few times, until nearly smooth. Scrape down the sides to make sure all of the dry ingredients have a chance to blend in, and pulse a few more times. The batter should be thin, frothy, and free of lumps. Set it aside to rest for at least a few minutes, until the apples are done.

3 Bake: Slowly and evenly pour the batter over the top of the caramelized apples. Place in the oven (even if it hasn't preheated all the way). Avoid opening the oven door for at least 15 minutes. Then, you can sneak a peek. Keep baking until it is golden brown and puffy all over, about 15 to 25 minutes total, depending on your pan and your oven.

4 Serve: As soon as you remove the Puff Daddy, flip it over onto a large plate or cutting board. If your pan is well-seasoned, it shouldn't stick; if it does, you can use a knife or spatula to help loosen it from the pan. (Another set of hands helps!) Serve warm.

Optional Prep

The batter can be made and refrigerated a day in advance. The apples can be caramelized up to two hours in advance and left in the pan at room temperature. When you are ready, rewarm them over low heat (with a squeeze of lemon juice or splash of water to help loosen them up) before adding the batter and baking.

Tips

Choose your apples wisely.

Firm-fleshed varieties like Pink Ladies and Granny Smiths cook differently than soft-fleshed apples like Gravensteins and MacIntoshes, which sometimes turn to applesauce in the pan. The firmer-fleshed varieties are likely to take 15 to 20 minutes to cook through and will puff up before they break down. When you see that puffing start to happen, give them a gentle poke with your spatula or spoon or press them to squeeze the air out. If you don't, the apples will rise to the top (which will be the bottom) of the Puff Daddy. To keep it all caramelly on the bottom (er . . . top), you want the apples to be caramelized, heavy, and free of air. As soon as they become translucent, and before they break down, remove from the heat.

Make it pretty. If your apple slices maintain their shape during caramelization, even after becoming translucent, take a minute to arrange them neatly in the pan (off the heat); use chopsticks, tongs, or a fork to place them in a spiral pattern, which will ensure every single bite has a perfectly balanced sweet-tart flavor. Then, pour over the batter.

LEAH SU QUIROGA *and* CAMMIE KIM LIN

(SERIOUS) NEW COOK



RECIPES, TIPS & TECHNIQUES

FOREWORD BY CAL PETERNELL

RIZZOLI
NEW YORK