

Thin pancakes

While I was growing up, we went running every morning. We were home schooled, and running was, I guess, a version of physical education. I never much liked it, not being very fast, but it was our routine. On weekends, Saturday mornings if I remember correctly, we'd go running and then we'd have pancakes for breakfast. We had a choice of thin pancakes or thick pancakes, and we got a say in which kind we had.

Thick pancakes were standard buttermilk pancakes. They were good, but they were not my favorites. They were thick enough that they ended up a little dry, at least to me. The thin pancakes were a little bit sweet, enough that I could eat them by themselves with no syrup or jam. They could be rolled up, which I liked, too. The thin pancakes always got my vote.

I don't have pictures this time, but they are very good and easy to make, and the recipe doubles well. This is one of my comfort foods, a recipe that makes me happy and reminds me of good memories with my family.

Thin Pancakes

Ingredients:

1 cup milk

1 cup flour

1 tablespoon sugar

2 eggs

pinch of salt

Put everything into a blender and blend until smooth. Use a spatula to scrape down the sides of the blender, then blend again. Cook in a lightly greased or nonstick skillet over medium heat.

Molasses cookies

I'm going to start working on the food part of this blog. I love food, cooking, and eating, and we have some really neat and somewhat unexpected recipes from various places. I have no idea how to take good food pictures, but it's worth a shot.

The first recipe comes with a story, as many of them probably will. Food and stories are very wrapped up in each other in my life. This started when Xander and I started combining our books and talking about cookbooks when he moved in many years ago. I grew up with a couple of standard cookbooks – Easy Basics for Good Cooking (I use the pie crust recipe every time I make pie), Better Homes and Gardens, and The Joy of Cooking. Xander grew up with the Settlement Cookbook. We were talking about the differences between older and newer versions of the cookbooks, especially since I keep an older version of Better Homes and Gardens specifically for a coffee cake recipe I loved growing up. I'll get to that in another post, I'm sure. Xander said he would like an older version of the Settlement Cookbook, since the one he had was newer than the one he grew up with.

I thought that sounded like an interesting thing to track down, so I went wandering online. I did find the version he wanted, but I also found a much older version, printed in 1901. I figured that was good, too, and when it showed up I discovered I was right.

First of all, on flipping through I found a section on invalid cookery. Invalid is one of those words, like POLISH, that you can pronounce two different ways, and most of that depends on context. It took me just a minute of reading recipes to discover that my interpretation (not-valid cookery) was wrong

– it was a section on cooking for sick people, or invalids. That made much more sense. It is full of recipes for things like albumenized milk (milk mixed with egg whites), beef essence (warm a piece of beef slightly, then squeeze out the juices and give it to the invalid to drink), and wine soup (wine, sugar, egg yolks, and croutons). I'm not sure I'd eat any of it. Another amusing bit was that it has ads for various things like holeproof hosiery and a company specializing in French dry cleaning.

The cookbook was printed before there were consistent thermostats on ovens, so it calls for cool ovens, warm ovens, and hot ovens. I'll give you what I've found to work best in terms of temperature.

In looking at the recipes, I noticed that the cookies seemed different than those I was used to. The proportions were not the same, and I couldn't tell exactly how they would come out. The recipe for molasses cookies sounded quite interesting, so I made a batch. They immediately became one of my favorite cookies ever. They are not cookies in the same sense we think of them nowadays, more like little cakes. They are tender and I really like the taste. They aren't nearly as sweet as most cookies I've had in my life, since molasses is the only sweetener. I looked in the newer versions of The Settlement Cookbook (the subtitle, by the ways, is "The way to a man's heart". I always thought it was directly through the sternum rather than through the stomach, but I'm sure I'm being too literal about that. Heh.) and the recipe for molasses cookies was nowhere to be found. I don't know who to ask about copyright, so if anyone has a problem with this, please tell me.

One very nice thing is that there aren't any eggs, so there's no issue with licking the spoon once you're done mixing the batter.

Today I decided it was time to resurrect the recipe for a

larger audience than those of us who peruse old cookbooks. With no further ado, here it is with my edits in parenthesis:

Soft molasses cookies

from the 1901 printing of The Settlement Cookbook

Ingredients:

1 cup molasses

1 3/4 teaspoons soda (this is baking soda)

1 cup sour milk (buttermilk, or a tablespoon of lemon juice or vinegar plus enough milk to make a cup)

2 teaspoons ginger (dried, powdered)

1/2 cup melted butter or other fat (I used butter)

1 teaspoon salt

Flour. (I used 3 cups of flour and it worked well, but this is a somewhat adjustable part of the recipe, as you will see)

(Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit – this isn't mentioned)

Add soda to molasses and beat thoroughly, add milk, shortening (the melted butter), ginger, salt, and flour. Use enough flour to make mixture drop easily from spoon. (I used enough to make a slightly stiff dough.) Let stand several hours (refrigerate!) to chill. Toss one-half of the mixture on a slightly floured board (the dough will be sticky), roll lightly to 1/4 inch thickness. Shape with round cutter (I used the lid to a mason jar, since I don't have cookie cutters, and we ended up with 28 cookies), first dipped in flour. Bake on a buttered sheet. (I've found that 15 minutes brings them out perfectly.)

I attempted to take pictures of the cookies, but I am not a food photographer, obviously. Here is the finished product. I hope you enjoy them as much as we do!

