

## Dill and Scallion Pancakes

MAKES ABOUT 40 MINI PANCAKES

These baby pancakes make terrific bases for all kinds of hors d'oeuvres. Try topping them with a little sour cream, chopped red onion and prosciutto, smoked salmon or caviar. They can be served cold or reheated in a 300 F oven for 5 minutes.

½ cup all-purpose flour

1 tsp baking powder

½ tsp salt

1 egg

½ cup milk

1 tbsp butter, melted

¼ cup chopped green onions

2 tbsp chopped fresh dill

2 tbsp vegetable oil

**COMBINE** flour, baking powder and salt in a bowl.

**BEAT** egg, milk and melted butter in a separate bowl. Stir egg mixture into flour mixture until combined. Stir in green onions and dill.

**HEAT** oil in a large non-stick skillet or griddle over medium heat. Add batter to skillet, using about 1 tsp batter per pancake. Cook for 1 minute, or until mixture is bubbly on top. Turn and cook second side for another minute, or until golden. Remove pancakes to a rack to cool, unless you are using them right away. Repeat with remaining batter.

### { hors d'oeuvres }

**One challenge** with hors d'oeuvres is finding a base that does not overwhelm the topping and takes little time to prepare. I often use vegetables such as Belgian endive, Bibb or Boston lettuce leaves, small iceberg lettuce cups, hollowed-out cherry tomatoes or baby patty pan squash.

It can be difficult to find a good commercial bread or cracker to serve with hors d'oeuvres. I avoid Melba toast (too crunchy and boring), pumpernickel squares (too overwhelming in flavour) and rice crackers (tasteless and crumbly). But it is easy to make your own toasts to use as a base for spreads or smoked salmon.

**BAGUETTE TOASTS** • Slice a baguette into thin slices on the diagonal. Place slices on an oiled baking sheet and bake at 350 F for 5 minutes. Turn toasts and bake for 5 minutes longer; they should be golden on both sides.

## { cooking equipment }

**Cooking well** is much easier if you have good equipment. You don't need lots of things, but good knives and a few good pots and pans are important.

**KNIVES** • At the minimum you should have a good chef's knife (with either an 8- or 10-inch blade), a paring knife, a serrated-edged knife for cutting fruit, and a slicing knife that can double as a carving knife. Before you buy, hold the knife to make sure it feels comfortable in your hand.

With the Japanese mounting a strong challenge to European knives, the hot new knife is a *santoku*—a cross between a cleaver and a chef's knife. It is made in both Japan and Europe, is very easy to handle and has good weight. The wider, shorter blade works well for moving ingredients from the chopping block to the pan. It is excellent for chopping, cutting and slicing because of its heft (good for cutting up a chicken, for example). It's a good all-purpose choice, although I still prefer a chef's knife.

Keep your knives very sharp by touching them up with a knife-sharpening steel before using. (You cut yourself less on sharp knives than you do on dull ones.)

**POTS AND PANS** • I prefer heavy pots with a bonded coating. The coating does not necessarily make them non-stick, but food does not adhere as easily. I also love copper pots and pans, but they are impractical for the home cook. They are expensive, difficult to keep clean and must be used with caution as they absorb and retain heat so well.

For a basic kitchen you need a large pot for stocks and pasta, a medium pot for vegetables and a smaller pot for sauces.

I use both regular and non-stick skillets. Non-stick are good for cooking eggs, pancakes and other foods that tend to stick, but they are not good for making sauces, because you need the little bits that stick to the bottom of a skillet after sautéing the main ingredients to add flavour to a sauce. They also do not work for caramel.

I also often use a sauté pan—a skillet with high, straight sides. It is useful for sautéing larger quantities, and for making stews.

Frequently I call for food to be seared on the stove and then baked in the oven. For these recipes, an ovenproof skillet works perfectly, and it cuts down on the cleanup. Just take care not to burn yourself when you take the pan out of the oven, and keep the handle covered until it cools down (I usually slip an oven mitt over the handle).