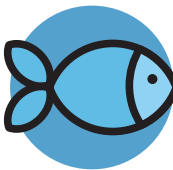


# Unleash Your Creativity on the Crepe

A versatile canvas awaits

By Anne Sears Mooney



Looking for a dish that's fresh, fast, festive and freezer-friendly? Think crepes! Associated with French cooking, crepes long enjoyed a reputation for being mysterious and complicated; in fact, they're not only "easy as pie," they're easier.


The crepe is as versatile to serve as it is easy to make. It can be savory or sweet and is an appropriate repast for any time of day—breakfast, brunch, lunch, hors d'oeuvres, dinner or dessert.

Crepes are the ideal dish to make and store for future use. They freeze well, and it only takes about a minute in the microwave to thaw a plastic bag of six frozen crepes.

Crepes originally were brought to this country by English settlers in the 1600s. Known then as pancakes, they were popular until the late 1800s, when they were replaced by the puffy, leavened griddle cakes, which we now call pancakes. Crepes were reintroduced to this country from France in the 1930s in the form of the legendary Crepes Suzette.

Actually, a crepe is just a very thin pancake that uses only eggs for leavening. If you have a food processor or a blender, a batch of crepe batter will take you no more than five minutes to assemble. Crepe batter is much thinner than pancake batter—about the consistency of heavy cream. The batter should be mixed and allowed to stand for at least 30 minutes or up to two days (refrigerated) to enable the flour to absorb all the liquid. If, after standing, the batter seems too thick, add water until you achieve the desired consistency. The cooked crepe should be very thin and delicate.

You will need a small skillet, six to seven inches in diameter, measuring the inside bottom surface of the pan. (A non-stick surface is preferable.) The size of the skillet will determine the size of the crepe. The only way to achieve a circular crepe is to cover the entire surface of the skillet with batter. Crepe batter is so thin that if it has any room to run, it will run, leaving you with amoeba-shaped pancakes that are impossible to roll or fold properly.

The savory crepe can be rolled around a variety of fillings ranging from a generous crumble of goat cheese to more elaborate seafood, meat or vegetable fillings. It can be baked and sauced or served at room temperature with a salsa. 



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## Basic Crepe Recipes

Makes approximately 20 six-inch crepes. Allow two six-inch crepes per appetizer or dessert serving, and four crepes per entrée serving. You can substitute olive or other oil for the butter in savory crepes, but the flavor will be slightly different. For dessert crepes, the flavor imparted by butter is essential.

### Basic Savory Crepes:

1 cup milk  
 1/2 cup water  
 2 large eggs  
 1 cup all purpose flour  
 2 tablespoons butter, melted, plus 2 to 3 tablespoons butter to coat the pan  
 1/2 teaspoon salt

### Basic Sweet Crepes:

1 cup milk  
 1/2 cup water  
 2 large eggs  
 1 cup all purpose flour, preferably bleached  
 2 tablespoons sugar  
 2 tablespoons butter, melted, plus 2 to 3 tablespoons butter to coat the pan  
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
 1 tablespoon rum or liqueur (optional)



**Method:** The method for both crepe batters is exactly the same.

Combine all ingredients, except the 2 to 3 teaspoons of butter, in a blender or food processor and process until the batter is smooth. Allow the batter to sit undisturbed for at least 30 minutes or up to two days. Refrigerate batter that will sit for more than one hour. If batter thickens while sitting, add water until batter consistency is that of heavy cream. The cooked crepes should be paper thin.

Heat crepe pan over medium heat and coat the bottom surface with about 1/2 teaspoon of butter or oil. When pan is hot but not smoking, lift the pan from the heat and tilt it slightly. Using a ladle or a small measuring cup, pour about 3 tablespoons of batter into the pan, beginning at the top edge, rotating the pan so that the batter evenly coats the bottom surface. Return pan to heat. When the top surface of the crepe becomes dry and the bottom is an even golden brown, in about one minute, quickly loosen the crepe around the edges with a table knife or a spatula and turn the crepe. The easiest way to turn a crepe, if you can stand the heat, is to grasp it between thumb and forefinger and flip it. Otherwise, use your spatula. Cook second side of crepe until golden spots form, about 20 seconds. The second side will not achieve the uniform brown of the first side, which is known as the "face" of the crepe.

Place crepe on a dinner plate or other flat surface to cool. Continue the process until you have used all the batter, buttering the pan as necessary. You can handle freshly cooked crepes more easily if you do not stack them directly on top of one another. You can make a neat stack later, after they have cooled.

Use crepes immediately or store for future use. You can refrigerate them for up to three days or freeze for up to two months. Warm frozen or refrigerated crepes slightly before attempting to separate them.

## Crepe Fillings

You can fold or wrap a crepe around almost anything, as long as the filling is "spreadable." Plan to use three to four tablespoons of filling for a six-inch crepe.

Here are some filling recipes to get you started. Once you get the hang of it, you can go crazy inventing your own. Don't forget about your leftovers. Served with a green salad, diced leftover chicken or ham with a few herbs and a little cheese sauce rolled into a crepe and baked for a few minutes makes a fabulous last-minute supper.

### Stacked Apricot, Pistachio and Goat Cheese Hors D'Oeuvre Crepes:

12 Basic savory crepes  
 3/4 cup ricotta cheese  
 3/4 cup fresh white goat cheese at room temperature  
 2 teaspoons brandy or cognac  
 1/2 cup dried apricots, finely chopped  
 1/2 cup pistachios, shelled and chopped

**Method:** In a bowl, mash together the ricotta and goat cheeses. Add the brandy and mix well. Mix in the chopped apricots and pistachios. Spread two crepes with the cheese mixture. Place one on top of the other so that you have alternating crepe/cheese/crepe/cheese layers, then top with a fifth crepe, face-side up. Gently press crepes together. Wrap with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 30 minutes or until you are ready to serve them. When they are firm, slice each stack into eight wedges and serve. Yield: 32 wedges.





### Chicken and Artichoke Entrée Crepes

- 12 to 16 Basic savory crepes
- 5 tablespoons butter
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1/4 pound fresh mushrooms, sliced
- 3 tablespoons all purpose flour
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- 1/2 cup light cream or half 'n half
- 2 tablespoons dry sherry
- 2 cups cooked chicken or turkey, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 package frozen artichoke hearts (8 ounces) thawed, drained, cut into thirds
- 1/3 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon fresh rosemary leaves, finely chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, or to taste
- shredded Swiss cheese for topping (about one cup)



**Method:** Melt 2 tablespoons butter in skillet; add onion and mushrooms.

Cook, stirring, until mushrooms are wilted and onions are translucent. Stir in remaining butter, add flour and cook, stirring, until bubbly. Gradually add broth, cream and sherry. Cook, stirring, until sauce thickens. Stir in chicken, artichokes, Parmesan, rosemary and salt. Correct seasoning and set filling aside to cool.

Divide filling evenly among crepes. Place a ribbon of filling down the center of each crepe and roll the crepe around the filling to form a cylindrical or "cigar-shaped" package. Place rolled crepes, seam side down, in one layer in a shallow baking dish or casserole. Cover with foil and bake at 350 degrees for 20 to 30 minutes. Uncover, sprinkle Swiss cheese over crepes and continue baking until crepes begin to brown and cheese melts. Serve immediately.

Yield: three to four servings of four crepes each.

The **savory** crepe can be rolled around a variety of fillings ranging from a generous crumble of **goat cheese** to more elaborate **seafood**, meat or vegetable fillings.

### Lemon Sherry Triangle Dessert Crepes

- 8 to 12 basic dessert crepes
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1/2 cup sweet cream sherry
- 3 tablespoons honey
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- Equal amounts of commercially available crème fraiche and lemon curd for topping

**Method for Crepes:** Melt butter in small saucepan. Add sherry, honey and lemon juice. Boil gently until mixture thickens slightly. Dip both sides of crepes into this mixture, then fold them in half, then in half again, so that they form triangles. Place crepes in a buttered, oven-proof serving dish. Pour remaining sauce over crepes. Broil until crepes are heated through and are lightly browned on the edges.

**Method for Topping:** In a bowl, beat together crème fraiche and lemon curd with a whisk or electric mixer until the mixture doubles in volume and holds soft peaks. It should be the consistency of whipped cream. Serve a dollop atop each serving of warm crepes. Yield: four to six servings of two crepes each.

