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Canarian Recipes for Shrove Tuesday

By Pamela Heywood

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For the British at least, Shrove Tuesday is probably better known as Pancake Day. Those wonderful delicacies, smothered in sugar and lemon and often tossed around in village competitions. As you will see from the recipes below, the Brits certainly don't have the monopoly of this type of fare for the occasion:

REBANDAS DE CARNAVAL

This a great way to use up stale bread at any time.

Ingredients:

1 "yesterday's" Canarian loaf (any crusty white bread like a French stick or baguette will do just as well), 1 egg, 1 cup of milk approx., Sugar, Sprinkle of ground cinnamon.

Method:

Slice the bread diagonally into 1/2 to 3/4 inch slices and discard the ends of the loaf. Beat the egg, milk and cinnamon together in a bowl then soak the bread slices briefly in the mixture. Lift them carefully and fry gently in oil in a shallow frying pan, turning once. Remove when golden, arrange on a plate and sprinkle with sugar. Watch them disappear fast!

(A variation on this recipe is to substitute half the milk with white wine.)

TORTILLA DE CARNAVAL

Ingredients:

Gofio, Plain Flour (optional), Three or four egg yolks, Ground cinnamon, Half a litre of milk, Sugar, Aniseed liqueur or Marie Brizard.

Method:

Mix the egg yolks with the milk, cinnamon and sugar (the amount of which you can vary according to taste), along with a dribble of the aniseed liqueur. Beat well, then add the gofio a little at a time, until you have a consistency resembling custard. (You can mix flour with the gofio, again according to preference). Fry small amounts of the mixture until golden in hot oil to make little pancakes. It is customary to eat them at Carnival time, accompanied by coffee.

Pamela Heywood has been resident in Tenerife since 1992. Formerly an accountant in the UK, she has since written for local magazines and newspapers and now runs several web sites, publishing a number of ezines. This article first appeared in Tenerife Topics, a monthly newsletter that looks mostly

at the other face of Tenerife from that the tourist usually discovers.

SHROVE TUESDAY – A SHORT HISTORY AND RECIPES

By Sharon Jacobsen

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Pancakes! Yummy! I don't think I know anybody, children or adults, who doesn't enjoy a pancake on Shrove Tuesday.

But have you ever wondered why we have this tradition of eating pancakes on one particular day of the year? Why, of all things, were pancakes fried and eaten on the day before Lent begins?

Well, with Lent being a time of fasting, when people had to get by on the most meagre of foods, pancakes were the perfect way of using up fat, butter and eggs, all food stuffs that were forbidden during the Lenten period.

As people have always enjoyed a good celebration, the frying and eating of pancakes soon became something of a 'fling' – a last day of fun before the solemnity of Lent begun and it's for this reason that many countries hold carnivals on Shrove Tuesday, also known by it's French name of Mardi Gras, meaning 'Fat Tuesday'. The most famous of these carnivals are without a doubt those of Rio de Janeiro and New Orleans.

Here in the UK, Shrove Tuesday celebrations are a rather more subdued affair, with pancake races being at the top of the events schedule. To anybody outside of the UK, the idea of running along streets tossing pancakes in frying pans must seem quite eccentric; but then that's the British for you.

It's believed that the tradition of tossing pancakes started in Olney, Buckinghamshire in 1445. Whilst frying pancakes, a woman was called to church for confession. Not wanting to ruin the pancake, she ran to church in her dress, still tossing the pancake in her pan. Quite why others followed, quite literally, in her footsteps isn't known but even today, most pancake race rules stipulate that women entering must wear dresses! Each are then given a frying pan containing a hot pancake and are sent

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out to run a 375 meter course over which they must toss their pancake at least three times. The race will usually end at a church where the winner is traditionally kissed by the bell ringer.

Not everybody is willing to run the streets tossing pancakes and not all towns and villages arrange races but even those who are quietly enjoying a pancake or six at home will be, according to superstition, bringing good luck to the home for the 47 days left until Easter.

Pancake tossing is quite an art, one that I've never managed to perfect. Some, such as Ralf Laue, take tossing very seriously. Ralf holds the world record for tossing a pancake continuously for three hours, two minutes and 27 seconds! Phew!

HOW DO I MAKE PANCAKES?

If you want to join in the fun of pancake day, knowing how to make a good pancake is essential. The following recipe will make about 12–14 pancakes, depending on how thick you make them.

Good pancakes should always be made from a mixture that was prepared at least an hour before frying.

~~ INGREDIENTS

1/2 lb (220g) self raising flour
1/2 pint (250 ml)milk
1/2 pint (250 ml) water (or, if you like, replace 100ml of water with club soda for fluffier pancakes)
2 eggs
pinch salt
1 1/2 oz (40 g) lard
lemon juice
sugar for sprinkling

~~ METHOD

1. Sieve the flour and salt into a basin and make a well in the centre.
2. Break the eggs one at a time and pour into the well.
3. Gradually beat the eggs and flour together, adding the milk a little at a time until the mixture has a nice, creamy consistency.
4. Beat the batter for a few minutes to aerate it, and leave to stand for at least an hour. After the hour has passed, the batter should be covered in tiny air bubbles.
5. Heat the frying pan or griddle with a little fat (lard is traditional but any fat will work) and pour on enough batter to cover the area needed.

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6. Cook until the top is dry and then either toss or turn the pancake with a flat knife.
7. Cook the other side until brown.
8. Throw this pancake away. Yes, I mean it. This first one is just to get the pan going – throw it straight in the bin (or feed it to the dog).
9. Repeat the process from 6–7.
10. Turn out onto greaseproof paper, sprinkle with sugar and a squirt of lemon juice as desired and either roll or fold for serving. Other toppings include jam, cream, sour cream, golden syrup, ice cream and berries.
11. Eat and enjoy.

WHAT IF I'M VEGAN?

If we were to stick to tradition, I'd have to say 'bad luck'. Fortunately, times have changed and pancakes have evolved with it so there are lots of vegan alternatives available.

I'm told that the following egg-less recipe is delicious although I have to admit that I haven't personally tried it. If you do, I'd love to hear your opinion.

Makes about 8–10 pancakes depending on their thickness.

~~ INGREDIENTS

8oz (250g) White Flour, preferably unbleached
1oz (25g) Soya Flour
1oz (25g) Caster Sugar
4 fl oz (125ml) Soya Milk
10 fl oz (300ml) Water
tablespoon of oil
choice of topping (lemon, sugar, golden syrup, jam etc)

~~ METHOD

1. Sift the flours and sugar together.
2. Mix the soya milk and water together, and add to the dry ingredients a little at a time, until you have a smooth batter with a pouring consistency.
3. Put a little oil in the pan and heat until very hot.
4. Using a ladle, drop the equivalent of about three tablespoons of the batter into the pan and

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immediately tilt it to ensure an even spread.

5. Cook until bubbles appear on the surface, then cross your fingers and toss the pancake. Failing this, flip it over with a spatula.

6. Cook the other side for a similar length of time – a good test of readiness is when it slides around the pan and is speckled with brown spots.

7. Make the first pancake a sacrificial one to season the pan. Ie throw it away!

8. Eat any disasters (or successes for that matter) with lemon juice & a sprinkling of sugar, golden syrup & a sprinkling of sugar, jam & soya cream or ice cream.

My grandad always used to add sultanas to his pancake mix – my mouth's watering just thinking about it so I might just throw a few in myself this year.

Whether you choose to stay at home alone with just a few pancakes for company, invite friends round to share with you or go the whole hog and arrange a pancake day race or visit a mardi gras carnival (there are some being arranged around the UK, although not on the scale of Rio, obviously), enjoy those scrummy pancakes and... happy tossing!

Sharon is founder of FriendsYourWay (<http://www.friendsyourway.co.uk>), a web service dedicated to helping women in the UK find friends in their own local areas. Sharon lives in Cheshire with her

partner, Richard, and however many of her three children happen to be living at home at any given time. She's interested in writing, gardening, crafts and living life to the full.

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