Farm and home - Beat a better batter

Brenda Cleeve
The word batter is derived from the French word "battre" meaning to beat and as a general rule a good beating improves a batter. The use of modern raising agents is tending to abolish this policy. Batter mixtures are not as popular as previously but they should not be overlooked as the basis for many simple, inexpensive and tasty dishes.

Batter mixtures fall into two groups—pouring batters which form the basis of puddings, both sweet and savoury, and coating batters for covering fruit, meat, fish, etc., before frying.

Most batters are improved by whisking as this helps to make them lighter by the addition of air but where the recipe makes use of raising agents (baking powder or cream of tartar and bicarbonate of soda) this is not necessary and the mixture should only be mixed until smooth. Beating in this case would remove the gas bubbles created by the raising agent and would result in a heavier batter.

Where raising agents are used they should be added just before the mixture is to be cooked. If added beforehand, some of the gas bubbles can escape from the mixture.

Stiffly-beaten egg white should also be added just before cooking to avoid the loss of the air previously beaten into the white, caused by the weight of the other batter ingredients.

Prolonged standing for batter mixtures helps to soften the starch grains in the flour and gives a lighter result.

All batters should be served hot and as soon as they are cooked, as they become leathery if allowed to cool and reheated.

**BASIC RECIPE FOR A POURING BATTER**

- 4 oz. flour.
- 1 egg.
- ½ pint of milk.
- Salt.

**BASIC RECIPE FOR A COATING BATTER**

- 4 oz. flour.
- ½ cup lukewarm water.
- 1 dessertspoon of melted butter or salad oil.
- 1 egg—yolk and white separated.
- Salt.
- 1 level teaspoon of baking powder.

**GENERAL METHOD FOR BATTERS**

1. Sift together the dry ingredients such as flour and salt.
2. Add the egg and any other liquid. Where the batter is to be beaten there is no need to beat the egg first. Fats such as melted butter and oil are added now. As
a rule, especially in the case of a batter which is to be beaten, it is better to add just sufficient of the liquid to make a thick, creamy mixture and then add the remainder when the mixture has been beaten. If all the liquid is added at once the mixture is too thin to be beaten successfully.

3. Beat the mixture until bubbles appear on the surface.
4. Allow the mixture to stand for \( \frac{1}{2} \text{ to } 1 \) hour.
5. Add any raising agents or stiffly beaten egg whites (according to recipe).
6. Cook and serve immediately.

**DISHES MADE FROM A POURING BATTER.**

Pancakes are a popular form of sweet and this mixture can be varied quite simply.

**Pancakes.**

Use the basic recipe for a pouring batter. To cook, heat a little butter in a pan and when hot but not burning pour in three to four tablespoons of the mixture, depending on whether you like a thin or a thick pancake. Thin pancakes are less tough than thick ones. Tilt the pan until the whole surface is covered with the mixture. Cook gently until the top surface is set and the underside is lightly browned. Toss or turn the cake and cook the other side until browned. Turn out of the pan on to sugared paper and roll. Before being rolled the pancake may be sprinkled with more sugar and lemon juice, or spread with a smooth jam or marmalade. If the pancakes are cooked gently so that the surface is not burnt it may not be necessary to grease the pan each time. The easiest way to measure the pancake mixture is to pour the required quantity for each one into a cup and this can be turned into the pan quickly.

**Sweet Pancakes.**

Add 1 tablespoon of sugar and flavouring essence to the batter mixture.

**Lemon Pancakes.**

Add the finely grated rind of a lemon and 1 tablespoon of sugar to the basic mixture.

**Apple Pancake.**

Add 2 tablespoons of sugar to the batter mixture. Pour half the batter into the pan and when it has covered the surface spread over it a layer of grated apple. Pour the remainder of the batter over the top and cook gently until the batter is set and the bottom layer is browned. Brown the top of the pancake in the oven or under the griller. Serve cut into triangles and sprinkled with cinnamon and sugar.

Other fruits such as banana and pineapple may be used in the same manner.

**Coffee Pancakes.**

Add 1 dessertspoon of coffee essence and 1 level teaspoon of baking powder to the basic mixture.

**Savoury Pancakes.**

Cook the pancakes in the normal manner using the basic recipe. When cooked spread each one with a mixture of minced bacon (or ham), minced onion and seasoning. Roll up each pancake and place in a piedish or casserole. Pour over a brown sauce or gravy and allow to cook in a moderate oven for 20 to 30 minutes. If preferred, the pancakes can be simmered in a saucepan for the same length of time.

**Steamed Batter Pudding.**

Place 2 tablespoons of jam, marmalade, or fruits such as currants, cherries, raisins, pineapple, prunes into the bottom of a greased pudding basin. Add 1 tablespoon of sugar to the batter mixture. Pour this into the basin. Cover with greased paper of the lid and steam for 1-\( \frac{1}{2} \) hours. This pudding can be cooked in individual moulds and these require \( \frac{1}{2} \) hour for cooking. Serve with a sweet sauce, ice-cream or cream.

**Date Batter Pudding.**

Add 1 cup of chopped dates to the batter mixture and cook as for a steamed batter pudding.

**Apple Batter Pudding.**

To the basic recipe add 2 tablespoons of sugar and 2 apples which have been peeled and grated, chopped or finely grated. Pour into a greased basin and steam as for the above puddings.

This pudding may also be poured into a greased piedish and baked in a hot oven.
for 5 minutes and then in a moderately hot one for ½-¾ hour.

**Baked Fruit Pudding.**
Use any stewed or tinned fruit kept in large pieces and heated in the syrup.

Make a batter using 1 cup flour, ½ cup of milk, 1 egg and ½ teaspoon baking powder.

Pour about a third of the batter into a well greased piedish. Place the hot fruit in the dish and cover with the remainder of the batter. Bring the syrup from the fruit to the boil and pour over the pudding in the dish. Bake for 5 minutes in a hot oven and finish cooking in a moderate oven.

**Orange and Rice Fritters.**
Make a batter using 2 oz. of flour, 1 egg, one cup of milk and the grated rind of an orange. Stir in half a cup of cooked, drained rice. To cook, drop in tablespoon heaps onto a hot pan greased with butter. Fry until a golden brown on both sides. Serve sprinkled with sugar. One dessertspoon of sugar may be added. If liked the orange may be omitted and the fritters served with a savoury dish.

**Sweet Corn Fritters.**
Make fritters as for orange and rice fritters, omitting orange, and sugar and substituting drained sweet corn for the rice.

**Nut and Ginger Pancakes.**
Use the basic recipe of a pouring batter using half the quantity of liquid. Add 2 tablespoons of chopped nuts, 1 dessertspoon of chopped ginger and 1 tablespoon of sugar. Cook as for fritters.

**Potato Pancakes.**
Make a batter using 2 tablespoons of milk, 1 egg and 2 tablespoons of flour. Stir in 2 cups of grated potato and a grated onion (small).

Cook as for fritters using a gentle heat to enable the potato to cook.

**Meat Pudding.**
Make a batter from 1 egg, 1 cup of milk and 1 small cup of flour. Add 1 chopped or grated onion, 1 tablespoon of chopped parsley, salt and pepper.

To this mixture add any left over meat such as mutton or beef, cut into thin slices or small pieces. Place in a greased piedish and bake in a hot oven for 5 minutes and then a moderate one for 15-20 minutes.

This mixture may be steamed in a basin for 1 hour.

Serve with any left-over gravy or a brown sauce.

**Cheese Pudding.**
Add 2 oz. of grated cheese, a dash of Cayenne pepper and seasoning to the basic batter recipe. Bake as for meat pudding.

**Yorkshire Pudding.**
Use the basic batter recipe. Melt a tablespoon of fat in a piedish and pour in the batter mixture. Bake in a hot oven for 5 minutes and then a moderate one for ¾ hour or until puffed and dry. This may also be cooked in individual moulds when the time for cooking will be much shorter.

**Yorkshire Bacon Pudding.**
Before baking the Yorkshire pudding, place strips of bacon on top of the pudding. This dish may be served as a main dish for a light luncheon or breakfast. If preferred the bacon may be chopped and mixed into the batter.

**Toad-in-the-Hole.**
Place skinned sausages cut into pieces (or cooked meat) into a piedish. Cover with a basic batter. Bake in a hot oven for 5 minutes and then in a moderate oven until the batter and sausages are cooked. If the sausages being used are very fat it is best to partly cook them in boiling water to remove some of this fat. Allow to cool before covering them with batter.

**USING A COATING BATTER**
Any foods covered in a coating batter should be cooked in fat which is just hot—with a very faint fume rising. If the fat is overheated the batter is cooked through before it has time to rise and the filling food will probably be only partly cooked. This batter may be used to make the following dishes.
Fruit Fritters.

Any firm fruit can be cut into neat pieces and dipped in the coating batter, and fried. Serve sprinkled with sugar. Apples should be peeled and cored and cut into rings about \( \frac{1}{2} \) of an inch thick. Apricots can be cut in halves and stoned (if fresh). Bananas may be cut into neat pieces if large or if small enough cut in halves down the centre or left whole.

Pineapples should be drained and the slices left whole or cut into halves.

Oranges should be peeled and then cut into slices as for apples.

Fish Fritters.

Use the batter to coat any cooked or fresh fish which has been cut into small pieces.

Meat Fritters.

Cut any left over cooked meat into small thin pieces and dip in the coating batter. Serve with gravy or a brown sauce.

These are only a few examples of the dishes which can be made using the simple batter mixtures. No doubt you will be able to make up some of your own with a little imagination and ingenuity.

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