

How I Discovered Breakfast

By Richard Calhoun

In my travels over the years, I've collected thousands of recipes. My interest in cooking stretches back to my childhood, when I made a pie crust that my father didn't throw out. He usually scooped out the filling and tossed the crust.

When I retired, I gathered all the breakfast recipes in my collection, numbering more than 1,300, and selected 475 of my favorites to go in my cookbook, "Breakfast Around the World." It took me eight years to put the book together.

In the mid-1960s, I was driving east of Yuma, Ariz., when I stopped at a truck stop for breakfast. While I looked over the menu, the waitress suggested the French toast. I really don't like French toast, so I said, "No, thank you."

She looked at me and said, "We have the best French toast in the world."

"OK, I'll give it a try," I replied.

While waiting for my order to arrive, my thoughts went back to my childhood, during the Depression. My mother made French toast with two eggs, a quart of milk and a loaf of white bread. It was basically-fried milk toast. Now you know why I didn't want French toast.

When the order arrived, the bread was cut about 2 inches thick, and it was golden brown. I topped it with hot maple syrup and took the first bite. The outside was crisp, and the inside melted in my mouth like angel food cake. It was delicious.

My collection contains more than a dozen French toast recipes. This recipe can be prepared the day before and cooked in the morning while you're getting ready for work. I took bits from several recipes and created this one.



Raspberry Cream Cheese Coffeecake is easy to make.



Richard Calhoun, of Oroville, Calif., left, has a collection of breakfast recipes that numbers more than 1,000. He's turned that collection into a self-published cookbook, "Breakfast Around the World"; the cookbook includes Oven-baked Maple French Toast, an easy and delicious way to prepare an old favorite.



Oven-baked Maple French Toast

- 1 loaf soft crust French bread
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons corn syrup
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans
- 6 eggs
- 1 3/4 cups half and half
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 teaspoon maple extract
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg

Cut the ends off the loaf of bread and slice it into 6 equal pieces, about 1 3/4 inches thick. Leave the crust on. Set the bread on a plate and leave for several hours to get stale.

In a small saucepan, melt butter with brown sugar, corn syrup and pecans. Pour butter mixture into a 9- by 13-inch baking dish. Place the bread slices on top of the butter mixture.

In a bowl, beat eggs, half and half, vanilla, maple extract, cinnamon and nutmeg. Pour about 2/3 cup of egg mixture on top of each slice of bread. Cover baking dish with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.

In the morning, heat oven to 350°F. Remove plastic wrap and bake for 30 minutes. Remove slices with a spatula and invert on serving plate. Yields 6 servings.

I have found many great recipes at bed and breakfast inns. Here's a coffeecake recipe from Barbara Stensvad of Chestnut Charm Bed and Breakfast Manor, in Atlantic, Iowa.

Raspberry Cream Cheese Coffeecake

- 3 ounces cream cheese
- 1/4 cup margarine OR butter
- 2 cups prepared biscuit mix
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1/2 cup raspberry preserves
- 1 cup confectioner's sugar, sifted
- 1 to 2 tablespoons milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Heat oven to 375°F. Grease a baking sheet; set aside.

In a medium bowl, cut the cream cheese and margarine into the biscuit mix until crumbly. Stir in milk. Turn onto a lightly floured surface; knead 8 to 10 strokes.

On waxed paper, roll dough to a 12-inch by 8-inch rectangle. Invert onto prepared baking sheet; remove paper.

Spread preserves down center of dough. Make 2 1/2-inch long cuts at 1-inch intervals on long sides. Fold strips over filling.

Bake for about 20 minutes, or until golden brown.

In a small bowl, stir together confectioner's sugar, milk and vanilla. Let coffeecake cool for 5 minutes before frosting. Drizzle frosting over cooled coffeecake. Yields 8 servings.

Traveling in the Midwest, I found many

breakfast casserole recipes. I really enjoyed this recipe; it won first prize for Tamara Datson, of Coffeyville, Kan., at the First Annual Kansas Egg Recipe Contest in 1985.

Biscuit Egg Scramble

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 8 eggs, beaten
- 5 ounces evaporated milk
- 2 cups cubed American cheese
- 1 teaspoon prepared mustard
- 1/2 cup frozen peas, thawed and drained
- 3/4 cup cubed, cooked ham
- 1 can (10 oz.) refrigerated biscuits

Heat oven to 375°F.

In a large skillet, melt butter. Add eggs, scrambling until just set; set aside.

In a saucepan, combine milk, cheese and mustard. Cook over low heat, stirring until cheese is melted. Stir in peas and ham.

Pour cheese sauce over eggs, stirring until combined. Pour into an ungreased 8-inch by 8-inch baking dish.

Separate dough into 10 biscuits; cut each in half. Place biscuit pieces, rounded edge up, in a single row around edge of the baking dish. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until biscuits are golden brown. Yields 5 servings.

If you are ever near Intercourse, Pa., be sure to stop at the Kling House Restaurant in the Kitchen Kettle Village. Order a bowl of baked oatmeal. I have found even those who do not care for oatmeal find this a special treat.

Baked Oatmeal

- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup sugar OR brown sugar
- 1 egg, beaten
- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1/2 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1 apple, chopped
- 1/2 cup walnuts, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

Heat oven to 350°F. Grease a baking pan; set aside.

In a large bowl, mix oil, sugar and egg thoroughly, then add remaining ingredients. Pour mixture into prepared pan. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes. Yields 4 servings.

When in Iowa, visit Pella, a town settled by people from Holland. Today they retain many Old World recipes. Mina Baker-Roelofs is co-editor of "A Taste of the World" cookbook, which includes this great apple pancake recipe.

Flensjes Met Appelen

- 3 eggs
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 cup flour
- 2 1/2 cups milk
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted
- cinnamon sugar

In a bowl, beat together eggs, salt and sugar. Blend in flour and stir, adding milk gradually, to form a smooth, creamy batter. Stir in melted butter.

Heat a frying pan and grease with butter. Pour 2 to 3 tablespoons batter into pan, tilting pan so batter will spread evenly. Cook 30 seconds, place apple filling (recipe follows) on batter and pour another 2 to 3 tablespoons batter over apples.

When brown on one side, turn pancake over.

Fold or roll pancake and sprinkle with cinnamon sugar. Keep hot. Continue making new pancakes the same way. Yields 4 servings.

Apple Filling

- 3 cooking apples
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 cup sugar

Core, peel and cut apples into thin slices. Pour lemon juice over apples and sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar. Use as filling for pancakes.