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Pancakes of the World, Dressed for Dinner



Andrew Scrivani for The New York Times

WATCH OUT, BREAKFAST! Pancakes move into dinner territory when they are savory and full of vegetables. [Above, Korean Pancake pa jun.](#)

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THERE is a world of pancakes beyond breakfast. Some are familiar to experienced cooks: potato pancakes and their Swiss cousins, rösti; corncakes and their South American relatives, arepas; and the earthy buckwheat crepes of Brittany. Others are a little more advanced, like the ones we cook here.

What all of these pancakes have in common is a certain off-the-cuff friendliness and flexibility. Once you understand that the batter essentially holds the more important ingredients together, and once you get the hang of what that batter looks like, you're free to start adding food almost at will, as you would with a soup or salad.

Certain components are basic, especially eggs and flour. Eggs offer lightness, flavor and protein. Flour can be augmented with or even replaced by bread

crumbs. Both eggs and flour are needed to bind moist ingredients like vegetables and seafood, and both provide bulk.

There are three splendid starting places here, all quite different. Italian-style pancakes are the lightest. Grated raw or cooked vegetables are bound minimally with flour or breadcrumbs and seasoned with Parmesan and onions. Spread the lumpy batter onto a hot, greased griddle or pan and cook until crisp on both sides, but be careful: they're so soft that they can be difficult to cook. Be sure the first side is nicely browned before attempting to turn them. Their fragility equals delightful tenderness, and they have an unmatched purity of flavor. Serve them after pasta, to complete a meal, or as a side dish with sautéed or roasted meat, poultry or fish.

On the other side of the spectrum is the **Korean pa jun**, a whole-pan pancake whose batter is stout enough to handle just about any ingredient you can think of, including chopped vegetables,

seafood, meat, bean sprouts or **kimchi**. **Pa jun** are fun and easy to handle; with a little practice and a nonstick skillet with sloping sides, you can flip them without a spatula. They are strongly seasoned and real crowd pleasers.



The spinach pancakes made in northern Europe (I first ate them in Sweden) nicely demonstrate what you can do when you have a wet main ingredient, like spinach, but want to wind up with a firm but moist pancake. This is a slightly more elaborate production than the previous two recipes: yogurt or buttermilk add acidity, there is baking soda for leavening, and there is a much higher percentage of flour. Nevertheless, these are easy to cook and delicious.

With all of these, if the batter looks or cooks too thin (that is, it spreads unappealingly over the pan), add a little flour, or some more vegetables. If it is too thick, stir in some liquid — milk, water, stock, whatever — a spoonful at a time. The batter should be spoonable but not pourable, essentially vegetables just moist enough to hold together.

Even with minor adjustments, none of these pancakes take more than a half hour to prepare. How easy can a delicious supper get?