

Crispy, Salty Latkes

Serves 2-6, depending on what else you're serving

The key to crispy latkes lies in a hot skillet with plenty of fat (I like the 50/50 blend of schmaltz/neutral oil) and getting absolutely every ounce of liquid out of those potatoes and onions. When you think you've wrung all the water out of the potatoes, keep squeezing. There's more liquid to give, I promise. And sure, I know the "let the potato starch settle to the bottom of the bowl and use that to bind" trick, but, uh, to paraphrase myself: Yeah, I'm not gonna do that. To make these gluten-free, use GF bread crumbs/matzo meal/ground up matzo boards, or simply use 2 tablespoons potato starch, which you may have on hand if you're gluten-free?

Ingredients

3 pounds russet potatoes (about 4-6), peeled

1 pound onions (about 2 medium or 1 large), peeled

kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1/4 cup fine plain dried breadcrumbs, panko or matzo meal (or 2 tablespoons potato starch)

1-2 large eggs

neutral oil, such as canola or grapeseed

schmaltz, a.k.a. chicken fat (optional, but recommended)

sour cream, apple sauce, chives, and salmon or trout roe, for topping (optional, but necessary)

Instructions

- 1 Using the largest holes of a box grater, grate the potatoes and onions into a large bowl. Season with kosher salt, toss and let the mixture sit for 5-10 minutes.
- 2 Taking small handfuls of the potato-onion mixture and using your hands, squeeze the liquid out over a colander fitted inside a bowl, then set the wrung out mixture aside. Continue this process until you've squeezed out as much liquid from the whole mixture as you possibly can (and when you think you can't squeeze anymore, keep squeezing).
- 3 Add 1/4 cup fine plain breadcrumbs or matzo meal (or whatever gluten-free substitute starch you're using) and toss the mixture to combine. Add 1 egg, season with salt and pepper and toss again until well combined (if the mixture looks a little dry, that's ok, it'll loosen up as it sits).
- 4 Line a rimmed baking sheet (with a wire rack insert, if you like) with paper towels. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat, and add a thin layer of oil, followed by about the same amount of chicken fat, letting it melt.
- 5 Once your oil/schmaltz is hot enough that it starts to shimmer, drop a little bit of latke mixture as your tester. It should start to fry and sizzle immediately (if it doesn't, let your skillet get a little hotter before proceeding), holding together in an irregular pancake shape (if it falls apart—more hashbrown than latke—then add the second egg to your mixture).
- 6 Once your skillet is hot enough, start to fry your latkes. Spoon a bit of the mixture into the pan, taking care not to pack them so they stay light and airy). Fry until deeply golden on the first side, about two minutes, then using a spatula, flip and fry until deeply golden on the second side, another 1 and a half to 2 minutes. Transfer them to the paper towel-lined wire rack as they finish.
- 7 Remove any stray pieces, eat them (chefs treat!), and continue to fry.
- 8 Top your latkes however your heart desires. For a savory-salty vibe, I like topping with sour cream, salmon roe, chives, and cracked black pepper, and for a sweet-salty vibe, I like topping with sour cream then dipping in apple sauce. Leave the dough in the bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Let it double in size at room temperature, about 90 minutes-2 hours, or, if baking tomorrow, refrigerate overnight.

NOTES: If you want to keep them warm, say, for a party, I suggest keeping them on a wire rack (no paper towel) in a 375 oven. This will keep them warm and as crisp as possible (just know they'll never be as crisp as when they come out of the oven). Just don't leave them in too long or they'll dry out and become rubbery instead of crispy. A true Shonda.