

As the name suggests, Pancake Day in England is all about - you guessed it - pancakes! In the seventh episode of the Right2Education podcast, we explore the history of pancakes, the traditions of Pancake Day, and there's even a recipe to let you cook up a batch of pancakes to enjoy yourself! Listen to the episode here, and read the transcript beneath!

Hello, everyone, and welcome back to the Right2Education podcast! I hope that you are doing well and taking care of yourself. And I hope that you are enjoying the nicer weather that we're beginning to be treated to. I always look forward to March as the month when the gloom of winter starts to creep away. It's the month when Spring starts to emerge, even if sometimes only very slowly. The leaves start to return to the trees so that they stop looking so bare, and, as flowers begin to appear, they bring with them little bursts of colour, and everything starts to look a bit more vibrant. And just the smallest bits of sun are always appreciated after the dark and grey days of winter.

But even though there's definitely still a lot of rainy days, with a lot of cold and windy weather, they just seem to make everyone even more grateful for the warmer moments when everyone bubbles with refreshed energy.

But, this year, it's not only because of the weather that I've been looking forward to March. This year, March is the month of one of my favourite English traditional holidays - it's the month of Pancake Day! And that's what I want to talk to you about for today's podcast episode - the history of pancakes, and the origin of Pancake Day. And I'll even give you a recipe so that you can make your very own delicious pancakes to enjoy!

Whatever mood I'm in, I always really love to enjoy some pancakes, and I know I'm definitely not the only person! Pancakes are a treat that are popular all over the world. Although they may vary between different countries, it seems as if almost every culture has their own version of a pancake. In North America, pancakes are usually cooked so that they rise and expand to become thick and fluffy, whereas in the United Kingdom, pancakes are unleavened, which means that they do not rise as they cook, and they end up looking like a *crêpe* which is a type of pancake which originated in France.

And, sometimes, other ingredients are added to the pancake mix to make them even more different. For example, in many cuisines, you can find potato pancakes - these are really very common in European cuisines, and you can find them in Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Ukraine, as well as lots of other countries! And in Sweden, there are even four different types of these potato pancakes!

There are also buttermilk pancakes, which use buttermilk to give the pancake a tart-like flavour, and these are common in Scotland, as well as in America. And if you change the type of flour which is used, that can really change the pancake a lot as well! For example, buckwheat flour is used to make the '*blini*' pancake in Russia, and the '*kaletes*' pancake in France, and the '*ploye*' pancake in Canada.

And that's still not all! Varieties of pancakes are found really all over the world! One of the national dishes of Ethiopia and Eritrea in Africa is a type of pancake called '*injera*', and there's pancake-like bread called '*lahoh*' which originates from Somalia, Djibouti and Yemen. In China,

you can find *'bing'*, in Japan you can find *'okonomiyaki'*, in Korea there's savoury *'buchimgae'* and sweet *'hotteok'*. And the list only goes on and on and on, with pancakes from India eaten for breakfast or as a sweet, pancakes in Pakistan swerved with honey, banana pancakes from Southeast Asia, Mexican hotcakes, Brazilian *'tapioca'* pancakes - I think you get the idea!

But why are pancakes just so popular? Why are they so common all over the world? Perhaps it's because they're so simple to make. In fact, pancakes are so simple and easy to make, that it's thought that even pre-historic societies, really very ancient societies, ate pancakes as the most common bread-like food. They only use a few ingredients which can be found all over the world, and they don't take much time or effort to make at all, so it's hardly that surprising that almost every culture has developed some version of pancakes.

And perhaps another reason for their worldwide popularity is because of their versatility. If something is versatile, this means that you can do a lot of different things with it. And you can definitely do a lot of different things with pancakes! You can eat them in a whole load of different ways! They may be simple to make, but that definitely doesn't make them boring! Not at all! I think that pancakes are delicious to eat, even if they're plain, but you can also add such a variety of toppings that you can give pancakes an almost endless amount of different flavours, and everyone is bound to like at least one kind of pancake!

If you like sweet pancakes, a classic topping to add is maple syrup, a very sugary and sticky sauce. But I prefer another classic topping which is lemon juice and sugar - with just a drizzle of lemon juice, the sugar dissolves a little bit, and there's still always a surprise crunchiness from that sugar, and the sweetness is perfectly balanced by the acid of the lemon! For other sweet flavours, you can also add whipped cream, or honey, or Nutella, or jam, or apple sauce, or fresh fruit - or, if you're feeling like a real treat, you can combine a lot of different toppings! And there's even some really fancy sweet pancakes! One famous kind of especially fancy pancake is called a *Crêpe Suzette*, which cover a thin crêpe pancake in a sauce made from sugar, butter, orange juice, the rind on the outside of a lemon, and an orange-flavoured liqueur. And then, once the pancake is all covered in the sauce, the dish is lit on fire in a burst of flames! But don't worry - this is only for display! The alcohol from the sauce catches on fire, but - thankfully - the pancakes don't get burnt and they can still be enjoyed! And even though these kind of pancakes are very popular, and even though the sauce is very specific, no one knows where they first came from! But there are a few legends about the history of the *Crêpe Suzette*. One legend says that the pancakes were actually first made by mistake in 1895 by a fourteen-year-old waiter who was serving a dessert for the Prince of Wales and his guests. As he was finishing preparing the dessert dishes, some of the alcoholic cordials caught on fire, and he thought he had ruined the dish! But, when he tasted what was left after putting out the flames, the waiter thought it was delicious! And so he still served it to the Prince and his guests. And the Prince enjoyed it so much that he used a spoon to scoop up all the leftover syrup. He even liked it so much, that he wanted to know the name of the dish so that he could ask for it in the future. And the waiter had to make up a name for the pancakes right there on the spot, so he named it after one of the Prince's dinner guests, who was a beautiful French girl named Suzette.

As well as sweet pancakes, you can also make a huge variety of different savoury pancakes, so even if you don't want something sweet, you can still enjoy the versatile dish. You can add

cheese, or smoked salmon, or grilled vegetables, or scrambled eggs, or a creamy mushroom sauce, or avocado - or anything else you might want! And, of course, you can mix multiple different savoury toppings as well, so there's really a huge amount of combinations to try! You could add some cheese, and some mushrooms, and some spinach - and then you have a sort of pancake known as *Galettes Florentine*!

So, you see, you can really do a whole load of different things with pancakes, you can give them an almost unlimited amount of different flavours! And because of this, they can be eaten at any time of the day. And perhaps that's another reason for their popularity - they can be eaten for any meal! You can have sweet pancakes as a dessert, or a whole pile of savoury pancakes for your dinner, or just one little pancake with a slice of cheese for a quick snack!

So, maybe it's not that surprising to think that there's a whole day dedicated to pancakes when you think about just how popular they are. But Pancake Day hasn't actually always been Pancake Day. In England, Pancake Day was originally known as Shrove Tuesday, which is a traditional Christian holiday. Shrove Tuesday is the day right before Ash Wednesday which is the first day of Lent, which is the period of forty days before the Christian festival of Easter. Traditionally, this period of Lent was a period of fasting, and, the day before the fasting began, everyone would use up all the last bits of the fatty foods that weren't supposed to be eaten during Lent. And, as pancakes are cooked by frying the batter in butter, in the 16th Century it became common to eat pancakes as a way to use up all the butter that had to be finished before Lent began.

As time went by, the custom of eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday stopped being a specifically Christian tradition, and it became a more secular tradition. When something is secular, it means that it is no longer associated with any religious ideas, and it is not bound to people of certain religious beliefs. So, as the custom of eating pancakes became more secular, the tradition grew to be observed by people of all different beliefs. And so Pancake Day was born - a day dedicated specifically to eating pancakes! Even though the tradition is no longer a religious tradition, Pancake Day is still held on the same day as Shrove Tuesday every year. And as the date of Shrove Tuesday moves every year depending on the calendar of the moon, the date of Pancake Day moves too. Of course, Shrove Tuesday always has to be on a Tuesday, but the date can fall anytime between the 3rd of February and the 9th of March.

But no matter which date it falls on, when Pancake Day comes, everyone welcomes the tradition of eating a whole load of pancakes. In fact, for some people, Pancake Day is the only day in the whole year when they'll eat pancakes - so you can definitely understand why they look forward to Pancake Day so much!

In the past, there were even more traditional events which took place on Pancake Day, as well as eating lots and lots of pancakes. There used to be community celebrations, and the day was turned into a big community festival. In towns all across the United Kingdom, there used to be massive mob football games, really large and unstructured matches which the whole community would take part in. This tradition dates back as far as the 17th Century, but the games stopped in the 19th Century after a law was introduced which banned any football matches to be played on the public highways and roads where these games would take place. But, in a few towns

throughout the country, the communities have maintained the tradition, organizing large football games on proper football pitches so that they can still play a match. And there's another tradition on Pancake Day, which used to be very common in all the villages and towns and is an event which still happens in quite a few places across the country: pancake races! For these races, competitors run through the streets while carrying a frying pan with a pancake in it, and they have to toss the pancake into the air and catch it back in the pan without stopping! Some of the races even have very strict rules about what the participants have to wear, and the runners have to dress in an apron and wear a scarf around their neck! It might seem like a crazy race, but there's actually an old legend which explains its origin. According to the legend, in the year 1445, a woman was so busy making pancakes that she forgot what time it was, and she forgot all about the church service that she wanted to go to. And when she heard the church bells ringing, she suddenly remembered the service, but she didn't have time to finish cooking the pancake. So she ran out of the house while she was still carrying the frying pan, throwing the pancake into the air while she ran to make sure that it wouldn't burn to the pan!

Although these traditions are specific to Pancake Day in England, there are actually celebrations all over the world on the same day. Internationally, these celebrations are known as '*Mardi Gras*' which is French for 'Fat Tuesday', and the origins of these celebrations are exactly the same as the origins of the English tradition: to use up all the fatty food before the start of Lent. In lots of countries all over the world, there are variations on the English Pancake Day, but, traditionally, they all involve eating lots of fatty and rich food! And a lot of them have big carnival celebrations, and sometimes they even last much longer than just the one day!

For example, in Italy there are big carnival celebrations on the Tuesday, but there are also festivities on the Thursday in the week before. And in New Orleans, in the American state of Louisiana, the *Mardi Gras* festival season actually lasts all the way from January the 5th, right up until Ash Wednesday at the start of Lent! Throughout the whole period, there are a lot of different celebrations, but in the final five days of the festival season, the celebrations grow into some really huge parties and parades! The first celebratory parade was in 1837, and, in the years since then, the parades have become ever more colourful and grand. Nowadays, the parades always feature a super long procession of floats, big decorated platforms which are built onto the back of a vehicle or towed behind one as the parade marches through the streets. And, on these floats, there are lots of people dressed up in super colourful and fantastic costumes, and as they travel down the streets, they throw little objects from the floats, typically multicoloured strings of little beads which fly through the air in a flash of all kinds of different colours!

And to close the celebrations, there are lots of balls organized for party-goers to attend; the main feature of these events is the dancing, but there are often also very large fancy dinners, and sometimes the balls are masquerade balls, which means that everyone attending the event has to wear a mask to hide their identity for the entire night.

But it's not just at the balls that people wear masks! The carnival celebrations always involve a lot of incredible costumes, sometimes with stunning designs of feathers and capes, and sometimes as mythical animals, or fairies! The most common colours to use in these costumes

are purple, green, and gold, so I'm sure you can imagine just how spectacular the streets look with so many rich colours everywhere!

Compared to these celebrations, Pancake Day in England might seem a little bit plain and simple. But, in my opinion, the tradition of eating pancakes is by far the most important celebration, and it's still more than enough to make the whole day really special and a huge delight. The parades might be spectacular to watch, and the balls may well be a lot of fun, but there's really nothing that beats the mouth-watering smell of classic pancakes filling the streets as everyone treats themselves to a delicious feast!

So, have I told you enough about pancakes now that you're desperate to try some of your own? Is your stomach rumbling with anticipation? Is your mouth watering with eagerness to taste the fluffy richness of some luscious pancakes? Well, let me share with you a recipe for some traditional English pancakes, and then there's nothing to stop you from tasting the amazing flavours that make this festival so very special!

Traditionally, in England, the pancakes are really quite thin, so it's best to use a wide and shallow frying pan - in fact, the shallower it is, the better, as this will make it even easier to flip the pancakes as you cook them.

Now, before you can start making the pancake, as well as finding a pan to cook them in, you of course also have to make sure you have all the ingredients ready. Pancakes are really great fun to make with friends, and they're a great dish for sharing, and the quantities for this recipe will make around eight large pancakes, so there's more than enough for a whole group of people. But if you want to make some just for yourself, you can easily scale down the measurements. Or you can make a big batch of pancakes and keep some in the fridge to heat up again in the oven later. Or, if you decide part way that you've already made enough pancakes, but you still have a lot of batter left over, you can simply put the batter in the fridge to make some more pancakes another time!

To make the pancake batter mixture, you'll need 175 grams of plain flour, three large eggs, and 450 millilitres of milk - if you're vegan, you can always replace the milk with a kind of dairy-free milk, such as soy-milk or oat-milk. And, as well as these ingredients, you should also make sure that you have some sunflower oil, or a bit of butter for frying the pancakes.

Do you have all the ingredients ready? Great - let's begin!

And remember, you can pause the podcast at any time you like if you need some more time while making the pancakes!

First, you want to make the batter. For this, it's good to use a nice big bowl that will easily contain all the ingredients and let you mix them really very thoroughly. Once you have your bowl, measure out all the 175 grams of flour and tip it into the bowl. Next, take your eggs and crack all three of them into the bowl, and then pour in half of the milk - so that's 225 millilitres of milk. Now that these three ingredients are in the bowl, use a whisk to mix them all up. You want to keep whisking them until the mixture is really as smooth as possible. It may take quite a while to get rid of all the lumps, and the batter will be quite thick, but it's really good to take your time

to make the mixture very smooth, as this will give you the best pancakes! Once you think the batter is as smooth as you can get it, pour in the other 225 millilitres of milk which is left over, and whisk the whole mixture again. And, again, you want to make sure that you get rid of all those little lumps, making the batter as smooth and as fluffy as possible. So if you need to pause the podcast and spend some time mixing, don't worry! Whenever you're ready, just hit play again to find out what to do next to cook some delicious pancakes!

OK - have you finished making your batter now? That means it's time to start cooking your pancakes! Take your frying pan and add just a little drizzle of the sunflower oil, or a tiny piece of butter, and start to heat the pan. You want to get the pan really quite hot to stop the pancake sticking to the bottom, and as it warms up, swirl it around to make sure that the whole surface is covered with either sunflower oil or melted butter. Once you're sure that the pan is hot, it's time to add the batter. You want to be careful not to add too much, otherwise the pancake will be too thick, and it might not cook properly all the way through. And the easiest way to make sure you don't pour in too much batter is to use a ladle to spoon in just a little bit to the pan. Fill your ladle with a scoop of the batter mixture, and pour in only just enough so that the batter covers the surface of the pan, but try not to add much more than that. Give the pan a little swirl to make sure that the batter is spread evenly, and then leave the frying pan on the heat. But make sure to keep an eye on the pancake as it cooks so that it doesn't burn! You want to flip it over as soon as the edges start to peel away from the pan - it should only take about one or two minutes of cooking before this starts to happen. If you think the pancake looks like it's cooked enough to turn over, and it seems firm and doesn't look as though it will break, give the pan a little shake to see if the pancake easily slides around the pan like one solid disc. If it still wobbles a lot with a lot of liquid mixture, this probably means it needs a bit more time of cooking before you turn it over. And if it doesn't move at all, this might mean that it's stuck to the bottom of the pan. But don't worry if this happens. Just take a spatula and slide it under the pancake to release it from the pan. Using your spatula, you can also take a peek at the bottom of the pancake. Is it starting to turn a little bit brown? Then it's time to flip the pancake! Slide your spatula all the way under the pancake, lift it out of the pan, and put it back down the other way up. Now, just leave the pancake to cook for another minute or two on the other side. You can use the same methods again to check when it is ready, seeing if it slides around in the pan like a disc, and taking a look to see if the bottom is becoming a little bit brown.

And then your pancake's ready!

Don't worry if the first one looks a bit funny, or doesn't cook quite right! Whenever I make pancakes, the first one is always a little bit messy or a bit burned, but after that first one, the next ones always come out a lot better! Sometimes it just takes a little practice to make the perfect pancake!

After you've made a few pancakes, you might even feel confident enough to try the traditional method for flipping a pancake - by tossing it into the air and catching it in the frying pan! To do this, you don't use a spatula at all, and you have to really make sure that the pancake is cooked enough that it won't fall apart in the air. Give the pan a good shake from side to side to make sure that the pancake isn't stuck to the bottom, and then slide it to the edge of the pan, so that it is creeping up the side just a little bit. Then, by flicking your wrist, toss the pancake out of the

pan so that it turns once over in the air. And make sure to keep an eye on it as it comes back down so that you can catch it easily in the pan! And once you're able to do that, you've truly mastered the art of making pancakes!

As you cook the rest of your batter, you can keep the pancakes that you have already made warm in the oven, and then once you've got a lovely pile of pancakes ready to be eaten, get all your toppings ready - and enjoy! You can try out some of the toppings that were mentioned earlier in this episode, or maybe you want to try out a new and different topping of your own! And if you do, please feel free to let me know about it by sending a message to the Right2Education email address - I'd really love to hear about whatever new topping you create so that I can try it for myself!

But, for now, I'll leave you to enjoy a fresh pile of pancakes! Just thinking about them, I can begin to imagine the warmth of their smell, the fluffiness of their texture, the delicious flavours... In fact, I think I'm going to have to go and make some for myself! I'll be back again soon with another podcast episode, but, in the meantime, stay safe and take care of yourselves! And enjoy your pancakes!