

# Poffertjes

by Lynne Belluscio

One of the Dutch specialties that is included in Charlotte LeRoy's 1823 manuscript receipt book is the recipe for "Puffett" which is also known as "puffert" or "poffertjes." In the 19th century they were also called "bol-labouche (belly puffs) and broedertjes (little brothers). I have also found that they were called "billabusse" or "bollebuysies".

These little yeast-risen pancakes are prepared in a special pan with round indentations. I had the delight of watching them being prepared at the folk museum in Arnhem in the Netherlands, while attending the European Open Air Museum Association eight years ago.

In the museum village square there was a poffertjes shop. They were being cooked in a very long iron pan with about 100 little indentations. The batter was poured across the pan, and then with a long handled fork, the unnecessary batter was removed between the little cakes, and as they browned on one side, they were quickly turned over with a quick flip of a metal stick. We bought plates of poffertjes with butter and powdered sugar. They are often served with strawberries and whipped cream.

Mrs. LeRoy's recipe is fairly simple. "4 lbs. of flour, 1 lb. of butter, 1 lb. of sugar, 8 eggs, spice and as much milk & yeast as you think proper." The batter should be like pancake batter. One source that I found said that these little pancakes originated in France and were served by monks

as holy bread. During the French Napoleonic Wars, it was impossible to find wheat flour because it was being sent to the army, so the monks started making the little pancakes with buckwheat flour. Eventually the pancakes became popular in Holland and the French forgot that they were part of their food traditions. Never the less, poffertjes should be made with some buckwheat flour.

While I was trying to find out about puffets, I learned about the special pans that are used to fry them and discovered images of them, including a photograph of a poffertjes pan that was used in George Washington's kitchen at Mt. Vernon. (A recent exhibit at Mt. Vernon is based on the kitchen ware. It seems that when the Mt. Vernon Ladies Association acquired the property, all of the original kitchen equipment was still there.)

So I'm looking at all these puffet pans, and I remember that I had seen one recently at the Hobby Horse on Main Street. So I stopped by a couple of days ago, and asked Ann to set it aside. I was still doing research, and strangely, I also discovered similar pans that were used for cooking escargot. I took a picture of the copper pan, with the wrought iron handle and sent it to Peter Rose, an authority on Dutch cooking, and she said without question, it is a poffertjes pan, so I have bought it for Mrs. LeRoy's kitchen, and we might even try making some poffertjes.

I also learned that poffertjes



Poffertjes pan.

are popular in Indonesia, and the thought is that the Dutch, who were known as world traders, probably brought the little pancake to Indonesia. There are similar little pancakes in Japan, called Takoyaki – but not served with fruit. Instead they are filled with diced octopus and other small bits of fish. These small wheat batter cakes are a popular snack and originated in Osaka in the 1930s.

Small electric table-top takoyaki grills can be used to make them, and I bought one through Amazon and hope to give it a try with some poffertjes batter. (I like octopus, but think I'll pass on takoyaki.)

I've looked for some contemporary recipes for poffertjes and there are several, but only a few that include buckwheat flour. So here is a contemporary recipe, and if you don't have a poffertje pan, they can be fried just like little silver dollar pancakes.

- 1 level tsp. instant yeast
  - 1 tbsp. milk
  - 1 cup buckwheat flour (100 g)
  - 1 cup flour (100 g)
  - 2 eggs
  - 1 tsp. sugar
  - 1/2 tsp. salt
  - 1 1/4 cups warm milk (250 ml)
  - 1 tbsp. butter
- Serve hot with butter and powdered sugar.



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