

Gordon's...

# Stuffed Crêpes Gratin

(Serves 4-8)

A retro dish which is always well-received as a starter. The crêpes can be made ahead and refrigerated, or even frozen.

## Ingredients:

### For the Crêpes

- 2 cups of plain flour
- Cup of cold water
- Cup of milk
- Pinch of Salt
- 4½ tbsp melted butter<sup>1</sup>
- 4 eggs

### For the Béchamel Sauce

- 4 tbsp unsalted butter
- 8 tbsp plain flour
- 2 - 3 cups whole milk (hot)
- (Optional: ½ cup of French vermouth or white wine)
- 2 tsp salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

### For the filling

- 1 tbsp butter
- 1¼ cups of roughly chopped spinach
- 1 cup quartered, mushrooms
- ¾ cup of béchamel sauce (from above batch)

### General

- 1 cup grated Gruyère cheese

**First make the crêpes:** put the butter in the smallest pan you have (the melted butter needs to have a little depth) and set over a very low heat to melt. Meanwhile, mix the remaining ingredients together until thoroughly combined. When the butter is melted, you should see the milky residue has fallen to the bottom. Skim 4 tbsp of the clear part<sup>2</sup> of the melted butter into your mixture and mix in. (Discard the milky residue). Leave your mixture to sit for at least 10 minutes, during which time the flour will continue to absorb liquid and the mixture will further thicken.

Put a medium-small<sup>3</sup> (approx. 18cm/7"), non-stick frying pan on a medium-high heat until hot. Pour a little of your batter mixture into the pan – just enough to make a thin coating on the bottom of the pan when you move it around. (If your mixture seems too thick to make a thin film on the pan, add a little more milk 1 tbsp at a time until you get the desired consistency.) After about a minute, lift up one edge with a spatula to check it is golden-brown. If so, shake the pan to loosen the crepe and toss to flip it over (or use two spatulas). The second side of a crepe or pancake never browns as much as the first, so after about 30 seconds, this should be speckled. Turn out onto a dish. Keep repeating this until you have used up all your mixture. Your crêpes should only be about 1-3mm thick. You should hopefully have between 8 and 12 crêpes. You can wrap these in foil and set aside until required. If it is more than about an hour until you need them, refrigerate them and they can also be kept for up to a month in the freezer.

**Make the béchamel:** have your milk hot at the ready. Melt the butter in a pan over a medium-low heat and then add all the flour at once and stir until they combine to form a roux, which is like a thick, doughy paste. Continue to stir over the heat for about a minute, at which point it may look a bit bubbly. Take it off the heat. While whisking the roux, gradually add your hot milk little by little, thoroughly incorporating each little amount before adding the next. Season with the salt and pepper. Put it over a medium heat and continue to stir/whisk until it reaches the desired thickness (which, in this case, is about the consistency of custard). Take off the heat and set aside until you make the filling.

**Make the filling:** melt the butter in a sauté or frying pan. Add the mushrooms and continue to cook until they are softened, and any liquid has reduced to a glaze.

Add your spinach and cook for another minute or two until the spinach is wilted down. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Decant into a bowl and add  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of your béchamel sauce and stir well through the mixture.

**To assemble:** preheat your oven to 190°C (Gas 5). Take an oven dish large enough to take all your assembled crêpes in a single layer and put a thin layer of béchamel sauce on the bottom – just enough to cover it when spread out (about  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup)– and sprinkle about a quarter of the grated Gruyère cheese over its surface.

Take a crêpe and lay it second-side-up (i.e. the speckled side). Put a spoonful of your filling mixture across the crêpe on the nearest third to you, then roll it up starting from the filling, rolling away from you<sup>4</sup>. Place it in the dish with the seam on the bottom. Continue to do this until all crêpes and mixture are used up<sup>5</sup>. Then, divide your remaining béchamel between the tops of all the crêpes and spread it across to cover all surfaces. Sprinkle your remaining Gruyère over the surface evenly and bake in the oven for 30 minutes until it's piping hot throughout and bubbling, but you don't want to overcook it.

Serve. One filled crêpe should be enough per person for a starter.

*(You can, of course, make it up to the stage it's in the oven dish and then refrigerate it for up to 24 hours, and put in the oven 30 minutes before you want to serve it.)*

## Notes

1. You only end up using 4 tbsp, but you want to leave the milky residue behind, and so you need to start with  $4\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp.
2. Tilt the mixture down to one end of your pan to make it deeper and wait a few seconds to ensure the residue falls to the bottom of the pool.
3. If you don't have a small frying pan, a standard one will do, but obviously you will get fewer, larger crêpes, which will take more of the filling. It all ends up the same, but means you can only serve fewer people with a larger serving each.
4. You don't want to overfill these to bursting point; you want to have a generous enough filling, but for them to be able to stay rolled-up and intact when you serve.
5. If you are happy that your crêpes are all well filled and you have mixture left, just put the remaining mixture around and between the crêpes before putting your sauce on.