

Gretchenes Latkes

(BUCKWHEAT ONION LATKES)

PEOPLE OFTEN ASK ME what kind of latkes were eaten before potatoes came to the Old World from the New. This onion pancake gives us a taste of that past. Buckwheat, called *farine aux Sarrazins* or *blé noir* in French, is used for this recipe. Although rendered goose fat was traditionally the oil used in Alsace and elsewhere in Europe, oils made from safflower, walnuts, and other nuts and seeds were also used, probably pressed by the farmers who brought them to markets where they were sold. The recipe, although attributed as Alsatian in one cookbook, is clearly from eastern Europe, as the word “*gretchenes*” means buckwheat in Polish.

Yield: 8 Latkes

1 cup buckwheat flour

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon baking powder

2 large eggs

2 cups grated onions (about 2 medium)

Vegetable oil for frying

Sour cream or applesauce for garnish

Stir the flour, salt, and baking powder together in a small bowl. Beat in the eggs, mixing well. Then stir in the onions.

Heat a nonstick frying pan and add a film of oil. Ladle about 2 tablespoons of the flour mixture into the frying pan and heat, frying until golden, then flip and cook the second side. Eat alone or with sour cream or applesauce.