



Farmer's Cheese Pancakes

Сырники

In the wide world of pancakes—a world I enter into whenever I can—these classic Russian *syrniki* rank at the top. It's not just their tangy-sweet flavor that keeps me coming back. It's also their emotional resonance. In Soviet times, *syrniki* were a mainstay of my diet, offering a quick hit of protein and an always-reliable meal. Over the years, I tasted my way through hundreds of pancakes. This recipe makes them the way I like them—tender rather than firm, and not too sweet.

Since the batter doesn't contain much flour, its consistency will depend on the type of farmer's cheese you use. I tend to like a slightly sticky batter to ensure that the pancakes turn out moist, so if the farmer's cheese seems dry, I often add a tablespoon or two of heavy cream to the batter. Even when the batter's sticky, you shouldn't have trouble shaping the pancakes if you flour your hands well and use a light touch. Make sure to cook the *syrniki* as soon as you make them, while the batter is still cold. Otherwise they might lose their shape. You can also shape the patties ahead of time, dust them with flour, and keep them chilled until you're ready to fry them. A 12-inch skillet accommodates about half the batter. If you want to make all the pancakes at once, use two skillets, adding enough butter and oil for both.

Makes 12, serving 4

2 egg yolks

2 cups (1 pound) tvorog or farmer's cheese, homemade (page 79) or store-bought

Scant ½ cup sugar

¾ cup flour

½ teaspoon baking powder

Pinch of salt

A tablespoon or two of heavy cream (optional)

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

Sour cream, for garnish

In a medium bowl, beat the egg yolks into the farmer's cheese, then stir in the sugar. Mix together ½ cup of the flour, the baking powder, and the salt and add to the cheese mixture. If the mixture seems dry, add a little heavy cream.

Place the butter and oil over medium-low heat in a large nonstick skillet and melt the butter.

Sprinkle the remaining ¼ cup flour onto a plate and dust your hands with some flour, too. With your hands or a spoon, scoop out about 2 tablespoons of the batter and set the mound on the floured plate. Use your hands to gently shape it into a round patty about 2 inches in diameter and coat it lightly on all sides with flour. Repeat with the remaining batter.

Carefully transfer the patties to the pan and cook them slowly until the undersides are browned, about 3 minutes. Turn with a spatula and cook until the other sides are browned, 3 to 4 minutes more. Serve immediately, with sour cream.