

Buttermilk Recipes

By Dan Gill

Basic, all purpose Brine

Per gallon of liquid (water, buttermilk or a combination) stir to dissolve:

1 cup of salt (preferably non-iodized dairy, kosher, or pickling)
½ cup of sugar (I like molasses)
2 tablespoons of ground pepper (I use freshly ground)
1 tablespoon each of granulated garlic and granulated onion

Just about any other seasonings or herbs can be added for flavor – I always include a little allspice as homage to the origins of barbecue. Ginger, rosemary and red pepper are popular additions. Use a non-reactive container such as plastic, glass or stainless steel (resealable plastic bags work great for small cuts). Cover completely with brine and refrigerate for about 12 hours. I don't bother with rinsing or soaking in fresh water before cooking.

Helen's Buttermilk Hotcakes

When I was coming along, Sunday mornings were always a special time at our house. First, Daddy put on some classical music; then Mother started cooking breakfast. Sometimes we had salt herring that we had put down in early spring, but usually Mother made her fantastic buttermilk hotcakes. If Mozart didn't wake me up, the smell of country ham frying in a cast iron skillet certainly did. Mother was famous for her hotcakes and took them seriously. Every once in a while, we made the trip to an old water-powered gristmill in Essex County to get stone-ground white flour and some whole wheat, seconds, or middlings (intermediate by-products of milling grain) for texture and substance. She had a special ceramic bowl and a special fork that she always used to mix the batter:

2 cups of white or whole-wheat flour *or* 1 cup flour plus
1 cup seconds, middlings, corn meal or buckwheat
Stir in 1 teaspoon of salt and 1 teaspoon of baking soda
Add 2 eggs and 1 Tablespoon of bacon grease and beat the eggs a little with a fork
Mix in buttermilk until the batter drips from a spoon

Heat a lightly oiled griddle until a moistened fingertip sizzles when quickly touched. A little salt sprinkled on the hot griddle, and wiped off, supposedly keeps the hotcakes from sticking. Mother also had a special tablespoon to dip the batter and pour five cakes at a time about four inches in diameter. When the bubble holes from escaping gas stopped closing completely on the upper surface, she flipped the cakes to cook the other side.

Sometimes, if the mood strikes and I get to the store early enough on Sunday morning, I will put on some good music and mix up a batch or two of Mother's buttermilk hotcakes.

