

English: Potato Pancake
Yiddish: Latke (לאַטקע)
Hebrew: Leviva (לביבה)



Photo courtesy toriavey.com

In the story of Hanukkah, the Jews, led by Judah Maccabee, fought the Assyrian-Greeks over the right to practice their religion freely. While they were successful, their temple was desecrated. They restored it but found only enough oil to light the *menorah* (a seven-branched candelabra used to keep track of the day of the week). Procuring more oil took eight days, but the small oil reserve lasted all eight days, which was considered a miracle. For that reason, it became tradition to celebrate by eating foods fried in oil.

The word *latke* is Yiddish, and is derived from the ancient Greek word for olive oil. In the United States, this is the most familiar word for this food, as the Ashkenazi version was imported by Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. It was made with the peasant food ingredients of the 1800s – potatoes, onions, and *schmaltz* (rendered chicken fat) – though older versions had been made with cheese. When Hebrew was revived as a vernacular language in the early 20th century, there was no word for this dish, so scholars revived a biblical word from II Samuel 13, in which Tamar prepares “cakes” (*levivot*) for her half-brother Amnon. According to the medieval French rabbi Rashi, these were probably made from semolina flour, boiled then fried – very different from the modern *leviva*, in any case.

This particular recipe is adapted from Anna Dibble.

If you plan to cook along with Aaron in real time, then you should prepare: Measure out all ingredients and have all pots and utensils ready. Wash the potatoes. If you plan to grate by hand instead of using a food processor, do that in advance. Get the pot of water boiling. For the apple butter, peel, core, and cut the apples.

Qty INGREDIENTS

2-3	Russet potatoes
1-2	Sweet onion
2	Extra large eggs
1/2-3/4 cup	Flour
1 ¼ tsp	Salt
	Corn oil

Step METHOD

- 1 Boil a pot of water with a small handful of salt.
- 2 Clean, but do not peel, the potatoes. Grate them, either by hand or with a food processor, to a finely shredded consistency.

- 3 Add potatoes to the boiling water. Bring back to a boil, turn to low heat, and cook for 5 minutes.
- 4 Drain the parboiled potatoes and wash with cold water to stop the cooking. Rinse thoroughly to remove starch. Squeeze to remove residual water.
- 5 Quarter the onions. Use the food processor blade, and pulse for about 10 seconds.
- 6 Beat the eggs. Add the eggs, potatoes, flour, and salt to the food processor.
- 7 Pulse 3-5 times until the potatoes lose their shredded texture.
- 8 If the potatoes do not hold their form, add more flour.
- 9 Add corn oil to a pan, about ¼ inch deep. Heat until the oil is hot (if you add a drop of water, and it sputters, it's ready).
- 10 Add batter to the oil, making round cakes about 2 inches in diameter, and less than ¼ inch thick. Cook on both sides until golden brown. Remove from pan, and place on a paper towel to drain.

Variations

One of the biggest variations is the consistency. Some people choose to leave the potatoes shredded, which gives a hash brown-like texture. Some choose to puree it more finely, which makes it more pancake-like.

Instead of potatoes, many other starches can be used – from zucchini to turnips to carrots. One year, the first night of Hanukkah fell on Thanksgiving, so I made yam latkes with cranberry sauce!

You can try other kinds of fats to fry it. I chose corn oil for its high smoke point and affordability.

Apple Butter (רסק תפוחים)

The traditional latke toppings are sour cream or applesauce. This is where you can get creative – cream cheese and lox, pesto and poached eggs, ricotta and lemon curd – you get the idea. I'm going the more traditional applesauce, but making it more of an apple butter. The distinction between the two is subtle, but apple butter tends to have a slightly higher sugar content and is cooked for a longer time, therefore becoming more concentrated.



*Photo courtesy
thepioneerwoman.com*

<u>Qty</u>	<u>INGREDIENTS</u>
500g	Apples
250g	Granulated sugar
	Cinnamon

- Allspice
- ¼ Vanilla bean
- 100g Apple cider (**not** apple cider vinegar)
- 20g Lemon juice

Note: These measurements are very imprecise. You can use more or less as you see fit. Want to add nutmeg? Get rid of allspice? Go for it.

Step METHOD

- 1 Skin and core the apples. Cut into ¼ inch chunks.
- 2 Add apples, sugar, cinnamon, allspice, cider, and lemon juice to a large pot.
- 3 Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 1 hour.
- 4 Use a stick blender to puree. (If you don't have one, a masher or blender can work.)
- 5 Cut the vanilla bean down the center and scoop out the seeds. Add the seeds and pod to the pot.
- 6 Cover and simmer for 1 hour, until it takes on a deep brown hue.
- 7 Tip the lid, allowing steam to escape. The apple butter will thicken more. Cook for 20 minutes.
- 8 Remove the vanilla bean pods before serving.