



Ask Ellie

Dietitian and *Healthy Appetite* host **Ellie Krieger** answers your nutrition questions and whips up some whole-wheat pancakes.

Q: Is there a good alternative to using lard or shortening in my recipes?

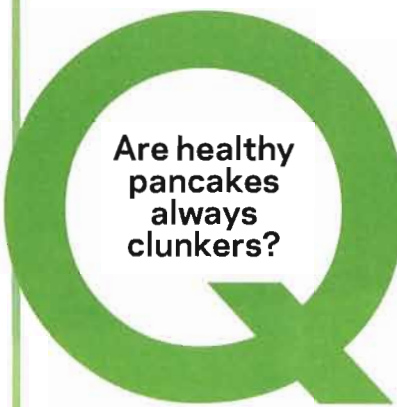
Rhoda Elliott, Oakland, ME

A: This may sound like a finance tip, but here's my advice: Be as liquid as possible. If a fat is solid at room temperature (like lard, shortening and butter), that means it is a saturated or trans fat. Liquid fat (oil) is usually unsaturated and better for you. But just as in money matters, it's good to diversify. For cookies and pastries, you can substitute oil for most of the fat, but keep a few tablespoons of the solid stuff for texture. For quick breads and muffins, you can go fully liquid with excellent returns.

Q: Do you have any ideas for healthy foods that will satisfy my sweet tooth?

Maro Naser, Sioux Falls, SD

A: My go-to sweet is a piece of quality dark chocolate, naturally loaded with antioxidants. But there are lots of other options. How about a mug of hot chocolate, some vanilla rice pudding or a dollop of creamy ricotta cheese topped with almonds and drizzled with honey? When these snacks are made with low-fat milk or part-skim cheese, they are nutrient-rich sweet-tooth satisfiers. Remember, if you eat well most of the time, there is room for a little of even the most indulgent desserts once in a while.



Are healthy pancakes always clunkers?

I've experimented with buckwheat and whole-wheat pancakes, but my family complains that they're tough, heavy and bland. Do you have a recipe for healthy pancakes that taste great?

Karen Quinlan, Columbus, IN

A: Using all whole-wheat flour can yield a heavy pancake. I like to use half whole-wheat and half all-purpose flour, so I get the goodness of whole grain and the lightness of white flour. I also use low-fat buttermilk: It has no more fat than low-fat milk and it adds richness and a great tangy flavor. Plus, when combined with baking soda, it helps make pancakes light and fluffy. Fresh or thawed frozen fruit also helps add flavor and texture. Try this recipe adapted from my new cookbook, *So Easy: Luscious, Healthy Recipes for Every Meal of the Week* (\$30; Wiley).



WHOLE-WHEAT APPLE PANCAKES

ACTIVE: 25 min | TOTAL: 25 min | SERVES: 6

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|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 medium apple, diced | 1 cup low-fat buttermilk |
| $\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour | $\frac{3}{4}$ cup nonfat milk |
| $\frac{3}{4}$ cup whole-wheat flour | 2 large eggs |
| 2 teaspoons baking powder | 1 tablespoon honey |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda | 6 tablespoons pure maple syrup |
| $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt | |

1. Preheat the oven to 250°. Put the apple in a microwave-safe bowl and tightly cover with plastic wrap; microwave on high until softened, about 2 minutes.
2. In a large bowl, whisk the flours, baking powder, baking soda and salt. In a small bowl, whisk the buttermilk, nonfat milk, eggs and honey, then slowly add to the dry ingredients, stirring until just combined.
3. Heat a large nonstick griddle or skillet over medium heat. Spoon $\frac{1}{4}$ cup batter onto the griddle for each pancake and sprinkle each with apple, then drizzle a little more batter over the apple. Cook until the tops are bubbly and the edges are dry, about 2 minutes. Flip and cook until golden brown, 1 to 2 more minutes. Keep the pancakes warm on a baking sheet in the oven while making the rest.
4. Place 2 pancakes on each plate. Drizzle with the syrup.

Per serving: Calories 230; Fat 3 g (Saturated 1 g); Cholesterol 75 mg; Sodium 290 mg; Carbohydrate 46 g; Fiber 3 g; Protein 8 g