

LEFSSE:

The Art Hedstrom Way



by Roz Stendahl

About this Booklet

I wrote this booklet as a thank you to Art Hedstrom. He and his wife Marian are perfect hosts. If you are lucky enough to visit them you'll understand what this means: no words can really capture this.

I have never learned as much on a vacation as I learned during the week I spent with them at Grand Marais, MN. Art didn't leave the Boy Scouts, he just made the world his troop!

I've eaten a lot of lefse in my life. Art's truly is the best. I take full responsibility for any mistakes or confusion in presenting Art Hedstrom's recipe and process.

Thank you Art and Marian for your gracious hospitality.

Roz Stendahl

This instruction booklet was created in QuarkXpress on a Macintosh. It uses Oswald and Spumoni for display fonts, and Humana Sans for the text font. Photos were taken with a Minolta Explorer Freedom Zoom automatic 35mm camera, which really couldn't do justice to the process.

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Lefse:

What is it?

Lefse (lef-suh) is a Norwegian concoction made of potatoes and flour. It is similar in size and use to a tortilla, but it is not a tortilla. Some cookbooks classify it as a fry bread. Please don't call it a pancake. Perhaps it is most like a crepe, except that it contains no eggs and you don't make it from a pourable batter!

Some families eat lefse spread with butter and then sprinkled with cinnamon and sugar. Others argue that jam is an appropriate spread. Still other families believe butter is the only topping. (My family falls into this category.)

Lefse is great for sandwich wraps, snacks, and as an accompaniment to ANY meal. Making lefse is also the only sensible thing to do with leftover mash potatoes.

*What follows is one man's recipe
and method for making lefse...*

The Recipe

Ingredients

8 cups of russet potatoes
1/2 cup of cream
8 heaping tablespoons of butter
1 heaping tablespoon of salt
About 1 tablespoon of sugar
About 3 1/2 cups of flour

The Process

Boil the potatoes until just tender. Rice the potatoes. While they are STILL hot put them in the mixer with all the remaining ingredients except the flour and mix. (The butter melts from contact with the hot potatoes.) Cool until it feels slightly cooler than room temperature.

Take half of your mixture and add one cup of flour, blending in the mixer. (If you make the whole batch at once the dough gets sticky. Also don't over blend: you don't want the gluten to develop. You also don't want the dough to get too warm or rolling out will be difficult.)

Set out your griddle and crank up the heat to 475 degrees Fahrenheit.

Prepare a round cutting board wrapped tightly with pastry cloth (these covers are available commercially; you want the pastry cloth to fit snugly!). Flour the cloth surface liberally. Cover your rolling pin with a pastry sock and dust on flour.

Make a tennis ball sized dough ball. Roll it in your hands until smooth. Place the ball of dough on your floured surface and pat into a 3" circle. Now roll until very, very thin. (Use more flour on your rolling pin if necessary.)

Slide the smooth, flat tip of a lefse stick under the lefse. Push along the line of the diameter. Lift. The lefse will be draped on both sides of the stick. Lay one side down on the griddle and use the stick to roll the other side of the lefse onto the griddle.

Cook until the griddle side is brown (lefse will puff up in places during this process). Flip using the lefse stick in the same way.

Remove from the griddle with the lefse stick and stack on a cooling rack. Place stack between two paper towels and refrigerate in a plastic bag.

Does it freeze well? The Hedstroms don't know: "There's never any left!"

The Process: An Illustrated Overview

1

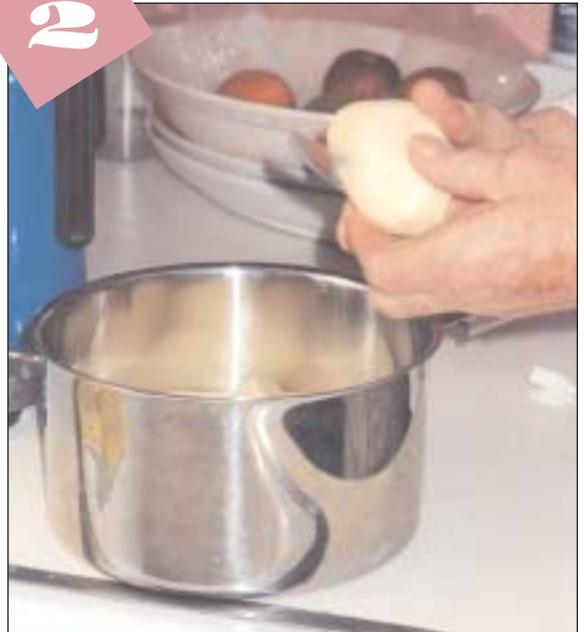


Prepare Your Batch

Any good process begins with the training of the novice for menial tasks. Here a kitchen helper peels the russet potatoes.

Next master chef Art Hedstrom cuts the potatoes into chunks for boiling.

2



3



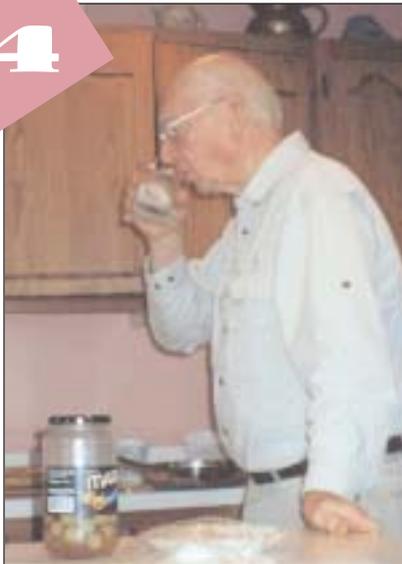
Art and Marian check the boiling potatoes.

Once the potatoes are boiled and drained you must rice them. Measure as you go: you'll need 4 cups to make your half batch (see "The Recipe," page 2).

5



4

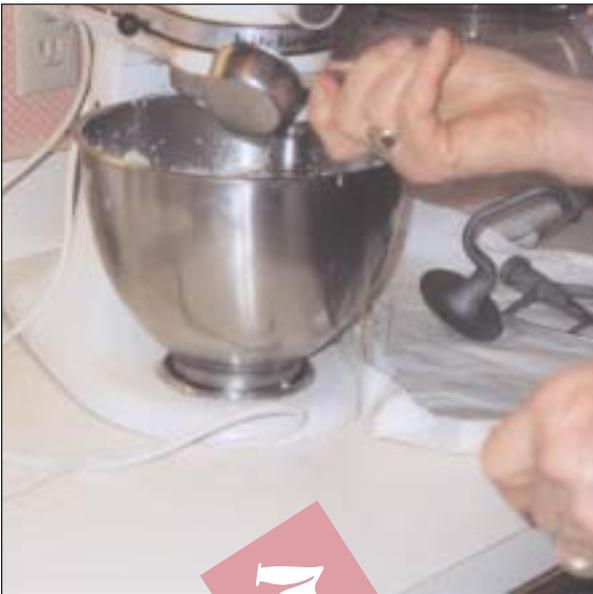


Making lefse is an exhausting physical endeavor. Those who wish to excel should engage in a rigorous course of physical fitness training.

Expert lefse makers know the benefits of pacing. Here Art enjoys a 3-olive martini while the potatoes boil.



After the potatoes have been riced and placed in the mixer you need to add butter...



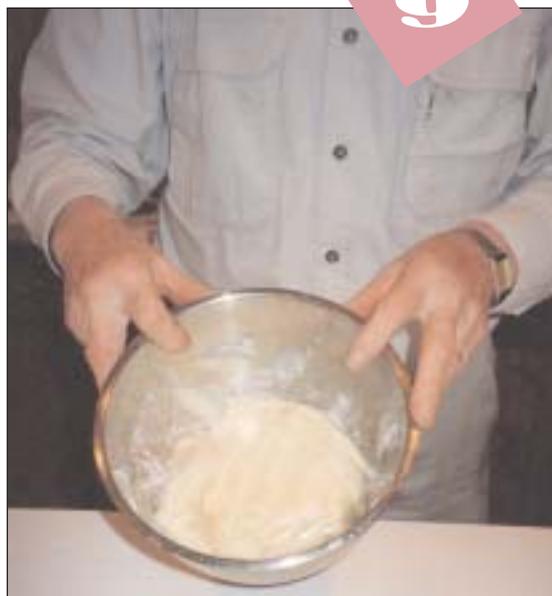
cream, ...salt, and sugar. Remember you are only making a half batch at this time. Reduce your ingredients accordingly!

Notice in photo 6 the blueberry pie sitting on the counter. Lefse makers can always be encouraged by the prospect of homemade delicacies like Marian's pies!



Your mixture will look lumpy as you add the flour. Remember not to over mix. You don't want the wheat gluten to become elastic.

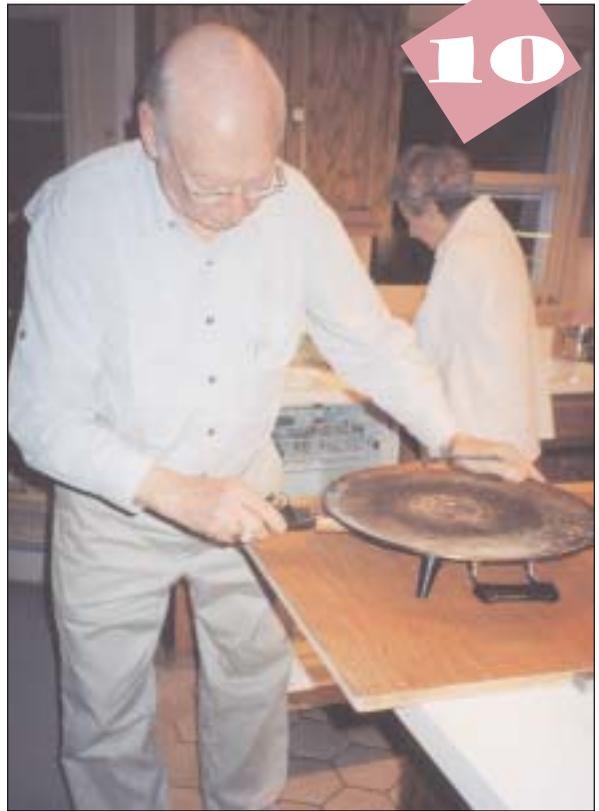
Cover your half batch with plastic wrap and set aside until it feels slightly cooler than room temperature. This is another good time to take a break: have a meal or light snack. Smoked herring is an excellent choice.



Prepare Your Workspace

While your dough is cooling it's time to prepare your workspace. A tidy workspace is an efficient workspace. Give thought to how you arrange your tools and griddle.

Here Art plugs in his electric griddle. He protects the counter of his kitchen island from the heat with a wide board. (The kitchen island is equipped with an electrical outlet!) Crank the griddle up as high as it will go (about 475 degrees F).



10

It is important to use a flat griddle without sides. You will not be able to use your lefse stick properly if your griddle has sides.



Here we see Art continue the setup of his workspace. He is wrapping his pastry board with pastry cloth. “You want it to be wrapped as tightly as possible,” he advises. “At home I have a round board with a fitted cloth.”

Opposite, in photo 12, Art spreads a liberal coating of flour across the pastry cloth covered board. Remember that more flour will be added as needed to keep the dough from sticking to the board or the rolling pin.

Photo 13, opposite, shows the dough ball size. It is roughly the size of a tennis ball. Art smooths the ball by rolling it between his hands.

Also in photo 13 we have an overview of the work area. The dough bowl and extra flour (in the measuring cup) are at hand. Art’s rolling pin (red handles) covered with a pastry sock and his lefse stick (blue handle) are at the ready. The griddle is an easy reach away.



Flouring the board, step 12.

Workspace and ball of dough, step 13.





14

You must now take your tennis-ball sized piece of dough and pat it into a flatter 3-inch oval. Don't forget to flour the top of your oval.



15

The rolling process begins in earnest now! The goal is an even, neatly circular, and very thin piece of lefse!

The pastry sock on your rolling pin, when aided by a good sprinkling of flour, keeps the lefse from sticking to your board or rolling pin. Working quickly and confidently will also prevent the dough from getting warm and sticky.

The lefse will take on the texture of the pastry sock and cloth wrapped board!

Sure, rolling out lefse might look easy, but it's a skill. Before the pastry sock could be located, I watched Art roll out several lefse with an uncovered rolling pin! While Art did it, please don't try this at home!



Lifting lefse with the lefse stick is another one of those acquired skills. Proper angle of attack and a bit of patience are needed.

Aim your stick along the diameter of your lefse. Equal parts of lefse should drape on either side of the lefse stick when lifted. Don't lift until your stick reaches the far side of the lefse.

If you live in Minneapolis, lefse sticks can be purchased at Ingebretsen's or at Litin House in the Mall of America. Wider sticks are preferred, but all lefse sticks must come to a very thin wedge at the leading point. This is the end which will slide beneath the lefse.

17

No butter or oil is used on the griddle!



Laying down lefse is also a tricky maneuver. The lefse stick, with draping lefse, should be positioned over the griddle so that half of the griddle remains visible. One of the draped sides of the lefse is then positioned on the griddle and the lefse stick is rolled

so that the top half of the draped lefse now folds out and covers the rest of the griddle. Photos 17 and 18 show this.

When flipping to brown the second side the lefse is picked up and laid down just as in steps 16-18.

A well floured board and rolling pin will ensure that the lefse is well floured on both sides. This prevents it from sticking to itself when transferred to the griddle.





Above in photo 19 a nicely browned piece of lefse cooks on its second side. Notice how the lefse puffs up from the hot griddle. The process is almost over. **One piece is almost ready.**

While each piece cooks, continue to roll the next piece. Did I mention timing is part of the process?

ENJOY!

Here, Diane Wesman (née Hedstrom) enjoys a piece of her father's lefse! Her expression pretty much says it all. (August 1, 2003, Grand Marais, Minnesota.)



So how many pieces of lefse does a half batch yield? Is anyone really counting? Perhaps 12 or maybe 15? Just keep rolling and cooking until the dough bowl is empty!



Art Hedstrom

How do you make great lefse?

“Start with GREAT mashed potatoes.”

Art Hedstrom is an entrepreneur, inventor, video artist, and former wild rice cultivator. He is also a tireless host who, when not giving lefse-making lessons, or leading nature walks to lecture on tree species, enjoys off-road driving in his Volvo Cross Country station wagon.