

# Batter's up – in the kitchen as we try to make fantastic fritters

TUESDAY, 18 MAY 2010 21:25 |

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Few people have much time to fritter away in the kitchen. And that's one reason why Giovanna Bellia LaMarca of Cliffside Park, a chef-instructor at the Institute of Culinary Education in New York City, likes to make fritters.

Strictly speaking, a fritter is any food that's been coated in batter and deep-fried. During a recent cooking demonstration at Bloomingdale's in Hackensack, LaMarca shallow fried her fritters in about a half-inch of canola oil. "If you're doing this as part of a meal, most people resist deep frying. This is easier and uses much less oil, and I like the shape that it yields," she said. Once the fritters began to firm up and turn golden around the edges, she flipped them over to complete the cooking.

"Every culture has some form of this," said LaMarca, the author of "Sicilian Feasts" and the forthcoming "The Cooking of Emilia-Romagna" (Hippocrene). But unlike the batters used to coat corn kernels in Southern-style corn fritters and the vegetables and seafood in Japanese tempura or Southeast Asian cucur dishes, the Italian-style batter LaMarca prepared was leavened with yeast.

Both yeast and baking powder lighten the dough they help create, but baking powder acts faster. A batter made with yeast has to be allowed to rise before it can be used. "Don't be afraid of yeast batters; they have a special texture and flavor," said LaMarca. To save time, a yeast batter can be prepared in the morning and left out to rise for use later in the day or be refrigerated, covered, for use the next day.

"I like to start with a master batter and add what's in season," said LaMarca. "It has no sugar in it, so you can make savory or sweet fritters." Her recipe for rice-and-raisin fritters, she noted, is "a good way to use up leftover rice or risotto." It can also be made with other dried fruits, such as cranberries and apricots. Similarly, her savory version offers "a way of recycling last night's leftovers." At this time of year, fritters made with raw or blanched locally grown leeks, spinach, Swiss chard, asparagus, and radishes are just a few of the possibilities. "I've always been a multi-tasker," said LaMarca. "I like my recipes to be multi-taskers, too."

## Giovanna's Fritters

For the Master Batter

- 2 and a half cups flour
- 1 tablespoon instant yeast (such as SAF Instant Yeast available from [www.kingarthurfour.com](http://www.kingarthurfour.com))
- 1 and a half cups warm water

Combine flour and yeast.

Stir in water until well combined.

Cover and leave at room temperature until tripled in volume (at least 1 hour). If not using the same day, cover and refrigerate. Bring back to room temperature before using.

## To Make Savory Carrot-and-Scallion Fritters

- Half cup canola oil

- 2 carrots, grated
- 6 scallions, chopped (green and white parts)
- 1 recipe Master Batter
- Salt and pepper to taste

Place oil in frying pan over high heat.

Stir carrots and scallions into batter. Season with salt and pepper.

When oil is hot, carefully drop tablespoonfuls of batter mixture into oil. Fry over medium heat until edges begin to firm up and fritter is golden on bottom.

Turn fritter and finish cooking other side. Transfer to paper toweling to drain.

When fritters are cooked and drained, sprinkle with additional salt, if desired. Serve hot or at room temperature.

#### To Make Sweet Rice-and-Raisin Fritters

- One half cup canola oil
- 1 cup sugar
- One half teaspoon cinnamon (optional)
- 2 cup cooked rice
- One half cup raisins
- 1 recipe Master Batter

Place oil in frying pan over high heat.

Combine sugar with cinnamon; set aside.

Stir rice and raisins into batter.

When oil is hot, carefully drop tablespoonfuls of batter mixture into oil. Fry over medium heat until edges begin to firm up and fritter is golden on bottom.

Turn fritter and finish cooking other side. Transfer to paper toweling to drain.

When the fritters are cooked and drained, coat them with cinnamon sugar. Serve hot or at room temperature.

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