

Scrippelle 'Mbusse

Difficulty Level

Medium

Cooking Time

1 hour, including resting time for the batter

Not many people know that the highest mountain peak in Italy outside of the Alps is in Abruzzo. The Gran Sasso d'Italia is part of the Apennines, the chain of mountains that extends the length of Italy. The corno grande' (big horn), the Gran Sasso's highest peak, rises to 2,912 meters—nearly 10,000 feet. In spring, summer, and fall, the mountain is a destination for hikers and picnickers. Large flocks of sheep, as well as herds of cattle and semi-wild horses, graze the mountain's mid- to lower slopes. In winter, the Gran Sasso becomes a destination for skiers.

Not surprisingly, winters in the towns and villages around the **Gran Sasso** can be harsh. Residents and tourists alike warm up with plates of spaghetti alla chitarra sauced with hearty ragu. Less well known, but equally welcome is a dish known, in dialect, as "scrippelle 'mbusse," or crepes in broth. This dish hails from Abruzzo's Teramo province, which is bordered by the eastern slopes of the Gran Sasso. Here, crepes are used in a number of delicious ways: layered into timballo; rolled into cannelloni; and in this soup.

There's a story that accompanies **scrippelle 'mbusse**, though the jury is out on whether it is true. It is said that a 19th century sous-chef who was preparing a meal for French officials staying in Teramo accidentally dropped a platter of rolled crepes into a pot of boiling broth. The result was so good that crepes in broth are still served throughout the province in the winter months. The crepes are light but nourishing, and they soak up the broth like sponges. This is a dish that truly warms the heart and soul and renews the spirit.

Cook's Note: Making crepes is a lot easier than you might think; all you need is a good non-stick pan or well-seasoned cast-iron skillet. Don't skimp on the broth. A good homemade broth is essential.

Makes 4 to 6 servings

Ingredients Sections

3/4 cup unbleached all-purpose flour

4 large eggs

1 cup whole milk

1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt

Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg

About 2 tablespoons unsalted butter

2 cups freshly grated aged pecorino Abruzzese or pecorino Romano cheese, plus more for serving [Ken: I use Locatelli cheese. Found in most grocery stores]

8 cups homemade chicken broth, more as needed [Ken: I use homemade chicken soup, but it can only be broth, carrots, onion, and celery]

Instructions

Sift the flour into a medium bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk together the eggs, milk, salt, and nutmeg. Slowly pour the egg mixture into the flour, whisking all the while to avoid lumps. The batter should be the consistency of thick cream. Cover with plastic wrap and let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes. [Ken: I use a hand mixer to get lumps out which is also the reason to rest for 30 minutes]

In a 9-inch nonstick skillet, melt a little of the butter—just enough to film the bottom of the pan—over medium heat. When the butter is hot, pour in a small ladleful of batter (a scant 1/4 cup) and quickly swirl the pan to coat the bottom with batter, forming a thin pancake. Cook for 30 to 45 seconds, or until just set and barely beginning to brown on the bottom. [Ken: Do not brown. Just cook quickly and thoroughly.] Using an offset spatula, flip the crepe and cook on the other side for 10 to 20 seconds, or until set. Transfer the crepe to a plate. [Ken: Pile them one on another.] Continue making crepes until you have used all the batter, making sure to add butter to the pan as needed. Stack the crepes on the plate as you remove them from the pan. You should end up with 12 crepes. [Ken: I doubled the recipe for my big eaters.]

In a large saucepan, bring the broth [Ken: Or use chicken soup as I mentioned above in the ingredients. Both will work fine.] to a boil over high heat. While the broth is heating, assemble the crepes. Sprinkle 2 to 3 tablespoons of cheese [Ken: Locatelli or you can use Parmesan.] on each crepe and roll it up, cigar-style. As the crepes are rolled, place them, seam side down, in shallow bowls, two per bowl. Ladle the hot broth over the crepes and sprinkle with additional pecorino, if you like. *Serve hot.* [Ken: As I roll them, I lay them in a casserole dish and then plate them later with three in each shallow-wide bowl. Try to use a bowl that they fit inside of and are covered with soup or broth. That's better than the picture below.]



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