

GRAND TOUR

Traveling Gourmet

LOVE FROM AFAR

By Diana von Welanetz Wentworth

WINTER IN PARIS? WHY NOT?

When I married Ted, he had never been to Paris. Having studied cooking at Le Cordon Bleu many years before, I was eager to show him the City of Light.

We arrived at Orly airport one busy Saturday, six days before Christmas. So much seemed just as it was years before, and through Ted's eyes I found myself experiencing the romance of Paris all over again. Breakfast of fresh oranges, *pain au chocolat* and *café au lait*, dinner before a performance at the Paris Opera at Le Soufflé, where they still serve the most delicious soufflés of all, a different one for each course.

Early on our first morning in Paris, we hopped on a Cityrama bus so Ted could have an overview of the entire city. From then on we walked everywhere, and that afternoon I led him up the winding streets of Montmartre, the historic and picturesque village atop a butte overlooking all of metropolitan Paris. Since the late 19th century it has been the haunt of artists and home of the exquisite Sacré Coeur Basilica.

Rounding a curve on a steep cobblestone street, Ted encountered his first of many Parisian crêpe vendors, a fetching blond woman with an inviting smile. Explaining the concept of crêpes to Ted, I ordered one for him with sugar and Grand Marnier, the aromatic orange-flavored cognac. He watched, wide-eyed, as she ladled smooth cream-colored batter onto a huge round griddle then spread it to the edges with a T-shaped wooden stick.



Drawing of Ted Wentworth by Christy Wentworth Coyne

"Look! She's using a bird perch!" Ted said.

She deftly flipped the huge pancake, wiped it with butter and sprinkled it liberally with sugar and Grand Marnier. After cooking it briefly on the second side, she folded it neatly into sixths, enveloped it in paper and handed it to him. One bite and Ted got that faraway look in his eyes that he usually gets only when eating chocolate.

I waited while he savored each mouthful until he eventually remembered I was there and offered me a bite.

"Uh . . . I don't know how to tell you this, Diana . . . but I think I'm in love with another woman."

I have developed a recipe to make for him at home that he says he likes just as well. But once in a while, I catch him with that look and know he is thinking about her. Ah . . . love from afar.

CRÊPES AU GRAND MARNIER

Makes about 20 crêpes

BASIC CRÊPES:

1 1/2 cups Wondra instant-blending flour
Pinch of salt
2 cups whole milk, or more if needed
2 eggs, lightly beaten
2 tablespoons vegetable oil

FOR SERVING:

Melted butter
Super-fine sugar
Grand Marnier
French vanilla ice cream (optional)

Place flour and salt in a mixing bowl. Combine remaining ingredients and add slowly, beating with a whisk until smooth. Let stand at room temperature for 15 minutes.

Brush the inside of a heavy 5- or 6-inch skillet or crêpe pan with vegetable oil and set over medium heat, until a drop of water dances on the surface. Stir the batter, then ladle about 2 tablespoons batter into the skillet, just enough to cover the bottom of the pan, while twisting and rotating the pan to coat the bottom evenly. The crêpe should be very thin. Ignore any small holes—they won't show when the crêpe is folded. (It may feel awkward at first while you get the feel of it, but you'll catch on!)

Brown lightly on one side, then turn with a spatula to brown the other side. Turn out onto paper towels with the pretty side down so that when the crêpe is folded it will be on the outside. Cook remaining batter the same way, and at the same time brush butter over the surface of the cooked crêpes as you stack them in stacks of six or eight. (They may be wrapped in foil and refrigerated or frozen at this point, and may be used in many recipes, either sweet or savory.)

Just before serving, reheat the crêpes on a griddle, two or three at a time, with the pretty side down. Brush with melted butter, sprinkle with super-fine sugar, and drizzle with Grand Marnier. Fold into quarters and transfer to serving plates, allowing three per person, with or without ice cream.

An earlier version of this story appeared in Chicken Soup for the Soul Cookbook by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen and Diana von Welanetz Wentworth (Health Communications, 1995) GT

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