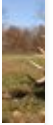




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CAST IRON CHEF

How to Grind Acorns into Flour (and Make Pancakes Out of It)

Make like a squirrel and rustle up some nuts for this forager's flour

By *Jamie Carlson*
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When I was 11 or 12 years old, I read a book called [My Side of the Mountain](#) It's a story about a 15 year old boy who runs away from his home in New York City to live in the Catskill Mountains. He lives in the wilderness for a whole year, surviving off the land. One of the things he did while out in the woods was grind acorn flour, and make pancakes with it. I remember reading that at the time and wanting to try it. Well, 30 years later, I have finally gone through the process and can now say that I've also made pancakes out of acorn flour.

The process for making flour out of acorns isn't actually very difficult, but it is time consuming and a little tedious at times.



Gather the Nuts



A 1-gallon bucket of collected acorns. *Jamie Carlson*

The first step is to gather up about a gallon of acorns. We have an abundant acorn crop this year in Minnesota (which means it will probably be a good year for squirrels, too). I had my niece Esther go around her yard and fill a one-gallon ice cream pail with fallen acorns. This was the easiest part.

Remove the Caps



A bowl of acorns with their caps removed *Jamie Carlson*

Remove the caps from the nuts. This took me about one whole *Game of Thrones* episode.





The nutmeat of a shelled acorn. *Jamie Carlson*

Place the acorns in the freezer overnight. This helps keep them fresh, and it also helps make it easier to crack them. There's a paper-like membrane around the nut and inside the shell; when you freeze them, that papery layer comes off the nut cleanly and leaves just the meat of the nut. The nuts will oxidize quickly, so it's important to toss the nutmeat into water so they don't turn brown.





Blending acorn nutmeat and water. *Jamie Carlson*

After you have shelled all the nuts into water, transfer the water and the nutmeat into a blender. Blend on high for several minutes.

Leach the Tannins



Soaking acorns in water to leach out the bitter tannins. *Jamie Carlson*

Then transfer the blended nuts and water to a large container. Place it in the fridge overnight. All the blended acorn paste will settle, allowing you to pour off the water. Add more water and stir the water and acorn paste. Place it back in the fridge and let sit for another day. Acorns typically taste bitter, so by changing the water every day for 3 to 4 days, you can leach out that bitterness.

Drain and Spread the Paste





Blended acorn paste, on parchment paper. *Jamie Carlson*

Pour off all the water one last time and then pour the paste onto cheesecloth, or use a clean towel and wring as much moisture out of the acorn paste as you can. Spread the paste out on a parchment-lined baking sheet and place it in the oven at its lowest setting with the door cracked open. You need to dry out the acorn paste until it is absolutely dry. As it dries, you can stir it and turn it over to help speed the process.

Grind the Paste





Use a grinder or food processor to refine the paste. *Jamie Carlson*

When the acorn paste is completely dry, it will be kind of clumpy. If you have a grinder you can grind the acorns into flour or you can use a food processor or blender. This should result in a fine flour, but you may still have some larger pieces.

Sift the Flour



Sift the ground acorns. Use a mortar and pestle to break up remaining large chunks. *Jamie Carlson*

Using a fine mesh sieve, sift the flour so that any debris or large clumps are separated. If you want, you can use a mortar and pestle to break up these remaining clumps.

Sift it Again



A second, finer sift of the acorn flour. *Jamie Carlson*



The resulting acorn flour. *Jamie Carlson*

At this point, you should have roughly three cups of flour. How you use it will be up to you. I had to make pancakes first, and let me tell you—they were the most satisfying pancakes I have ever eaten.

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Acorn P



Acorn-flour pancakes. *Jamie Carlson*

Ingredients

- 1 cup acorn flour
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons maple sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 egg
- 1 ¼ cups whole milk
- 3 tablespoons canola oil

