

Gullycakes
D.M. Pliska
03242024
madzander@gmail.com

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By

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I was eight the first time my dad made Gullycakes. My family was camping in the north woods in a large pop-up camper. Early one morning, I awoke, got dressed, and climbed out of the camper. The morning was crisp and clear. The sun threw long shadows of trees all over our campsite. It was quiet and still as I sat at the picnic table watching the chipmunks scurry around looking for food. There was dew on the camper and the station wagon, so I drew some cold, wet smiley faces on the windows of the car.

The camper creaked as someone else woke up. There was a thumping and bumping in the camper and my dad came out. He yawned and stretched, "How 'bout some pancakes?" he asked.

"Mmm," I said, "Pancakes sound great. But shouldn't we wait for Mom?"

"Nah, I think I can do it," he replied. He opened the back of the station wagon and dug around in the camp box. He got out the pancake mix, a large bowl, a spoon, and the griddle. From the cooler under the camper, he took two eggs, a stick of butter, a bottle of maple syrup, and a carton of milk. Together we mixed the batter. I cracked the eggs and my dad poured the milk. I watched as he stirred and stirred. With the batter mixed we moved over the fire pit.

The fire pit was cold as the fire from last night had completely burned out. He said, "What we need is to get some wood for the fire. Go into the woods and see what you can find."

I went into the woods behind our campsite and there was a gully with a creek running through it and it was very muddy. Along the bank of the gully, I found a dead tree that had fallen over. I took what I could carry and brought it back to the campsite. My dad had a small fire going. He broke a few sticks over his knee and added them to the fire. It crackled and popped. He blew on the kindling and the flames spread, yellow and hot. We sat by the fire and warmed ourselves, while we waited for the fire to get hot enough.

Finally, my dad put the griddle over the fire and put a pat of butter on the middle of it. When the butter had melted and was beginning to sizzle, my dad poured four pancakes on it. The tops became bubbly.

"Uh...Dad, don't we need a flipper?" I asked.

"Oh, no!" he said as he ran over to the camp box and started to rummage furiously. "Where is it, where is it?" he mumbled.

"Where is what?" my mom asked from the camper sleepily.

"Honey, do you know where the spatula is?" he called from the camp box.

"It's in the camp box," she said. When my dad bent over the camp box again, I saw the flipper in his back pocket.

"Dad, it's in your pocket!" With the flipper in hand, he rushed over to the griddle. By now the pancakes were very burnt and smoking. He took off the burnt ones and poured new ones.

"I'll take care of these," he said as he walked into the forest, balancing the pancakes on the spatula. While he was gone, the pancakes turned brown, bubbled, and then turned black. They started to smoke.

When he got back, he looked at the pancakes and said, "I'll have to throw these into the gully as well." He poured new pancakes and started into the woods with the burnt ones. By the time he returned, the pancakes on the griddle were burnt as well and we were running out of batter.

He sighed, "I'll try one more time." He poured the last four pancakes and ran into the woods with the burnt ones. I used a hot pad and took the griddle off the fire and set it on a rock beside me. When I heard him coming back I put the griddle back and the pancakes continued to cook. They got nice and golden on the edges and smelled great. "Wow, I must be faster than I thought. These are hardly cooked at all," he panted.

"Better flip `em, Dad," I said.

"Watch this," he said wielding the flipper. He flipped the pancake up and over, but he missed the griddle and it fell into the dirt. "Dang," he said looking at the ruined pancake. There were only three left.

"Dad, maybe..." I started.

"I bet I can do it with this one!" He slid the flipper under another pancake and with a flick of his wrist, he flipped it up, over, and straight into the fire.

"Dang," he said watching the fire engulf the pancake.

“It was a good flip, Dad,” I said touching his arm that held the flipper, “but couldn’t we just turn over these two.” He looked at me and smiled. He nodded and gently turned them over. They quickly browned on the other side. He took them off the fire and put them on a plate.

We looked at the two golden pancakes on the plate. “There isn’t enough for everyone, so let’s just eat these. One for you and one for me,” he said. He took one and I took one. They were hot and crispy, light and delicious.

“Dad,” I said, “you make great Gullycakes!”

The camper creaked as someone else woke up. There was a thumping and a bumping in the camper and my mom came out. She yawned and stretched, “How about some pancakes?” she asked.

My dad winked at me and said, “That sounds like a great idea!”

The end.