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the charm of the **DEMIJOHN**

By Jessica Zen

The beautiful, bulbous demijohn is in demand these days as a highly sought-after decorative piece. The stunning shades of turquoise, amber and emerald beckon shoppers with their delightful shapes and sizes. Whether you want a one-of-a-kind antique or are searching for something brand new, there are plenty of options. Demijohns are popular throughout Europe and make great additions to any home to add a little flair.



Unfamiliar with the demijohn? They are glass vessels that were used for transporting alcohol or anything else that couldn't be moved in a wooden container. With a large body and small neck, they were originally placed in wicker, metal baskets or wooden crates to avoid breakage. The term "demijohn" dates back to the late 1700s and is thought to come from the French term "damejeanne," which literally translates to "Lady Jane." The term may have referred to the shape of a stout woman in traditional 1700's clothing.

Recently, demijohns have been trending in the home design world. There are so many variations of color, size and style that the versatility of this product is quite impressive. If you're on the hunt, there are lots of places to look for the perfect one. Reproductions are less expensive, but also have less character. Originals have more character, as they have imperfections in the glass, but will also cost more. Demijohns can range anywhere from 50 to 200 euros, depending on the size and quality. For originals, shop at flea markets and antique shops for the best finds. If shopping in Germany, antique shops like Antikhandel Döllinger in Markt Erlbach, Anno Domini in Nittenau, Neumanns Antiquitäten in Berlin and Kunst Oase in Munich are great places to start looking.

Once you've found the perfect demijohn, or five, the fun begins. You get to start decorating! There is so much inspiration out there for how to style your demijohn. Put one or several on your mantle and add flowers, seashells, starfish or other beach-inspired items for summer decorations. If it's winter, think about adding holly berry garland, evergreen branches and even pine cones to the mantle to spruce it up. If you're going for a French country look, you can't go wrong with a little greenery, lavender and herbs.

*For originals,
shop at flea
markets and
antique shops for
the best finds.*

The light blue or even clear colored demijohns are splendid for this theme.

If you really want to highlight your beautiful demijohns, display them in a hutch. This will look especially beautiful if you have various sizes and colors. To make the display pop, consider painting the hutch a similar color to one of the demijohns and voila! You've got a serious eye-catcher.

The fun doesn't stop there. You could place demijohns in a tray on the coffee table to add a little color. Go even further and add them to your bathroom on a shelf, perhaps with some sweet smelling flowers. Make these vases the center of attention on your dining table. There's no wrong way to decorate with these delightful pieces. Buy one in each color if it tickles your fancy and your home will only be more lovely.

Shop until you find the perfect demijohn, then get ready to get crafty and decorate. On your hunt for the best piece, who knows what other treasures you will uncover? It's all part of the fun! ■



PHOTO of the month

Surrounded by scenic mountains, Bergen, Norway should be on your bucket list. The fjords—narrow inlets created by a glacier—are also a showstopper while in this idyllic country. Colorful wooden houses are dotted along the calm waters on the wharf.

Photo by Geoffrey Chung.

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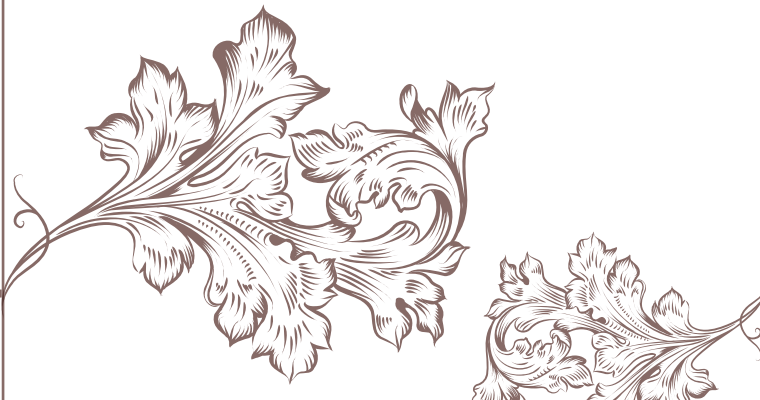
SCHWÄBISCH GMÜND

By Karen Bradbury



One of the great things about traveling by train through Germany is the possibility to break up one's journey along the route. Smaller cities that can be seen within the space of just a few hours make for perfect jumping-off points. Recently, en route home from a long weekend spent with a friend, I decided to stretch my legs with a stroll through Schwäbisch Gmünd, a city of some 60,000 residents in the state of Baden-Württemberg, about 35 miles east of Stuttgart.

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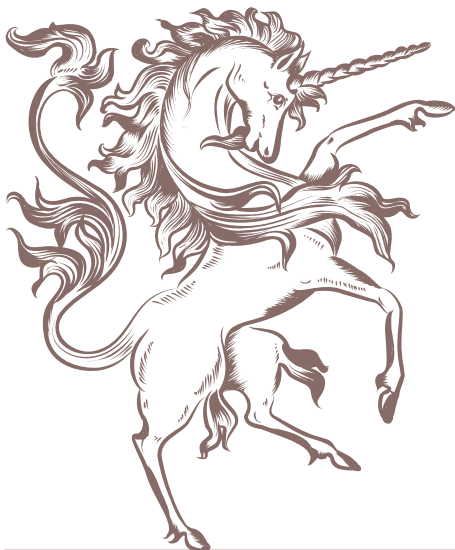
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Of the hundreds of German towns I've passed through in my travels, seldom have I seen one so welcoming to train passengers. Directly in front of the station, an informative signage invites new arrivals to discover the town along a set route passing by the town's places of interest. As I strolled past colorful metal figures towering three stories high and a castle garden ablaze in the waning colors of autumn, I realized I'd hit upon just the right place to add color to an off-season outing.



As the walking route passed over a babbling brook, a leftward gaze revealed a golden metallic house with square cutout patterns still managing to sparkle despite overcast skies. The modern structure, home to a restaurant, reminds visitors of the town's jewelry-making past. In front of me stood the castle-like Fünfknopfturm, or Five Button Tower, a former defense tower topped by five multicolored tiled turrets.

Carrying along the pedestrian zone leading into the town's medieval core, creatively decorated shop windows, images of unicorns, a symbol of the town and oversize plastic furniture installations instilled a touch of quirkiness to the ancient surroundings.

Schwäbisch Gmünd is known for its churches, two of which stood out. The gothic Münster of the Holy Cross impressed with its soaring nave and the perfect symmetry of its interior columns. The even older Johanniskirche, a Romanesque basilica dedicated to St. John the Baptist, had its very own leaning tower.



LEFT THE CASTLE-LIKE FÜNFKNOPFTURM, OR FIVE BUTTON TOWER; CENTER THE SOARING NAVE OF MÜNSTER OF THE HOLY CROSS, A GOTHIC CHURCH IN SCHWÄBISCH GMÜND; RIGHT THE MARIENBRUNNEN, A FOUNTAIN ADORNED BY A HALOED MADONNA



Market squares, the beating hearts of age-old cities, are usually lively places, but on this day, a federal and religious holiday, I had the space to myself. This gave me the time and space to admire the Marienbrunnen, a fountain adorned by a haloed Madonna. The Paulaner and Alpen Wirtshaus brew pub restaurants looked like prime spots to sample hearty Swabian cuisine, but alone and not particularly hungry, I pressed on.

The sight of a castle-like dwelling atop a hill lured me onward and upward. My efforts rewarded with a view of the sturdy brick Haus am Königsturm, a defensive tower turned youth center. Across the street and even higher upon the hill, I spied a steep and scary looking slide that ran through a twisting tunnel before spitting its riders out. A tiny park next to the slide offered a lookout point with birds-eye views of the town below and the rolling hills that surround it.

With daylight waning and miles to travel before my day was through, it was time get back on the road. As I retraced my steps back to the station, the setting sun broke through the clouds, tracing golden outlines against church spires, trees and turrets. A gentle farewell or an invitation to return some day and linger longer? Time will tell. ■

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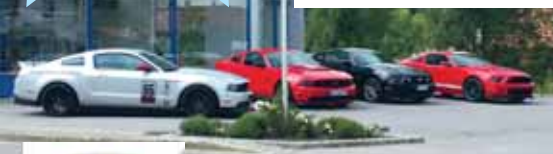
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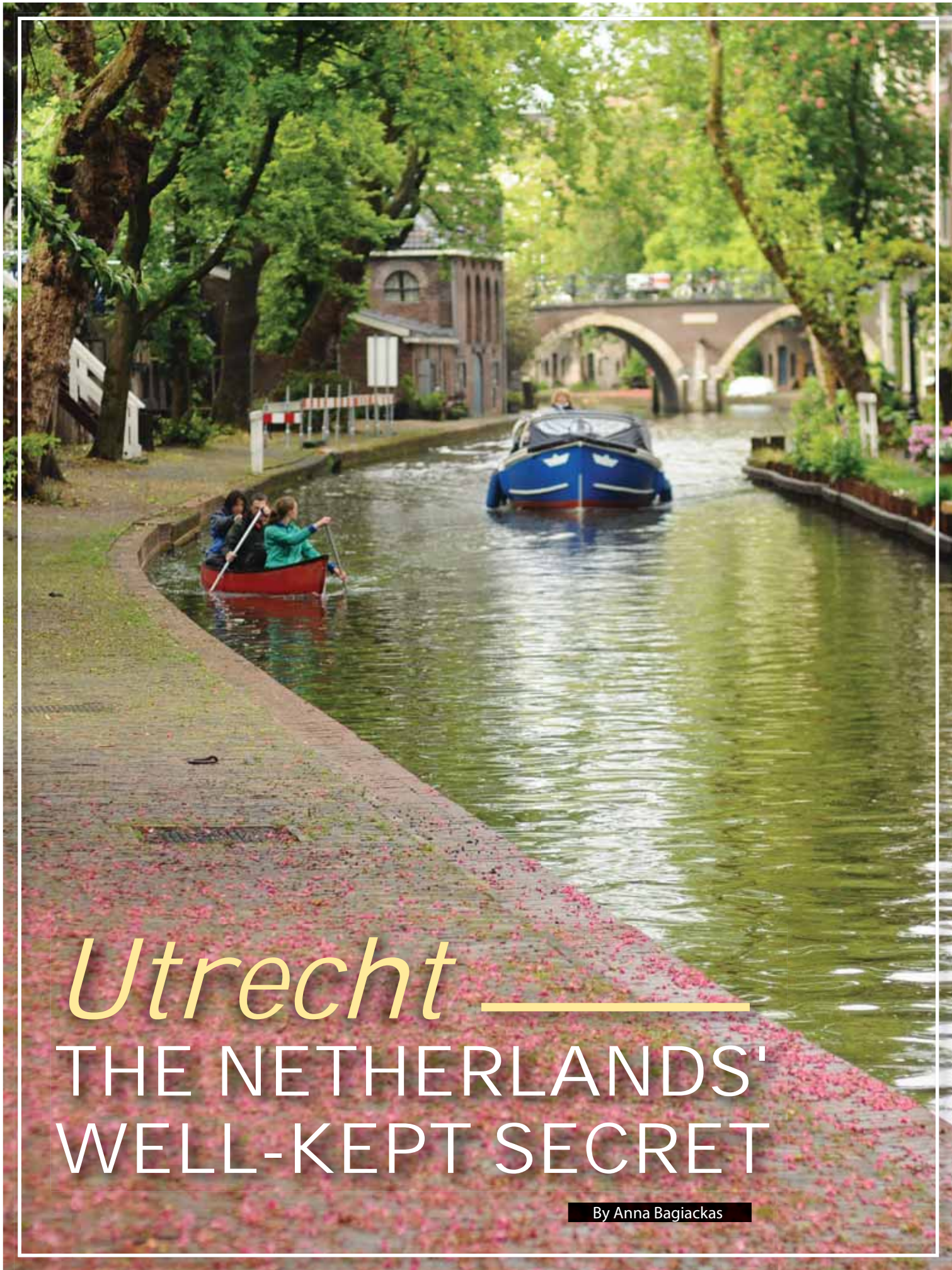
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Utrecht — THE NETHERLANDS' WELL-KEPT SECRET

By Anna Bagiackas



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CAN YOU KEEP A SECRET?

Have you heard of Utrecht, in the Netherlands? Although this city is often overlooked—or even unheard of—compared to Amsterdam, Utrecht continues to be a very well-kept secret because the people who live there love it. With a charming, car-free city center, canals to rival any Dutch locale and rich cultural offerings, there is lots to enjoy here. Some even argue that Utrecht is a truly Dutch city, compared to Amsterdam, which has become more international.

A LITTLE HISTORY

Let's start with some background. Utrecht is located in the middle of the country, about 45 kilometers from Amsterdam. Currently, it is the fourth-largest city in the Netherlands and because of its location, is a central hub for railway and transport, giving Utrecht the busiest rail station in the country. It is home to the largest university in the Netherlands, providing it a university-town atmosphere. It is also known as a great cycling city.

Utrecht was the most important city in the Netherlands up until the Dutch Golden Age in the 17th century, when it was overtaken by Amsterdam. Since the 8th century, Utrecht was the country's religious center and that role persists today, represented by the Dom Tower that still presides over the skyline. Some of the buildings in the ancient city center go as far back as the High Middle Ages.

It's also important to mention the history of the waterways, which have shaped the growth and landscape of the city for centuries and have made it such a unique place to visit! Utrecht was fortified by the Romans around 50 A.D.; the moats still exist today around the old town. In the 1100s, the flow of the Rhine was directed into canals and the wharf system was created, establishing the two-level street along the canals you see today.



WHAT TO DO & SEE

As with many cities, to get a flavor of Utrecht, you should visit the old town. You can walk around the Oudegracht, the curved canal that runs through the ancient city. A 465-step climb up to the Dom Tower, the tallest belfry in the Netherlands, is a quintessential experience in Utrecht. You can also visit the Kasteel de Haar, a moated castle from early 1500s. Spending time wandering along the wharfs and sitting on outdoor terraces is also time well spent if you're wanting to live like the locals.

Utrecht has become well-known for the cultural life in and around the city. Art, theater, film and music have flourished there, being home to an Early Music Festival and the Netherlands Film Festival, among other cultural events. You will also find music venues, such as the TivoliVredenburg music complex and rock and jazz music halls. Branching out of the fine arts and into architecture, it is also worth a visit to the Rietveld Schröder Huis, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

If you enjoy shopping and being immersed in the buzz of activity, check out Hoog Catharijne, a large shopping mall next to the train station, Utrecht Centraal. (Hint: you can actually get a great view of the city and Dom Tower at one of the cafes in the mall!) Or maybe you are simply interested in railways and trains, and if that's the case, be sure to visit the national railroad museum, Spoorweg. If it is peace and quiet in nature you're looking for, head to Oude Hortus, Wilhelminapark, Griftpark or the Botanic Gardens.

And what does Utrecht offer in terms of eats? While you will find lots of Dutch fare, this city is filled with menus from all over the world. Indonesian cuisine in particular shines as a result of the Netherlands' history of colonization in Indonesia. For the beer lovers out there, Belgian Beer Café Olivier and Kafe Belgie are two great options for large selections of brews to taste. ■



TOP LEFT:
Spoorweg, the
national railroad
museum.

TOP RIGHT:
The modern
architecture of
the central train
station.

MIDDLE:
An aerial view of
the moated castle,
Kasteel de Haar.

BOTTOM:
Hoog Catharijne,
a large shopping
mall next to the
train station.

10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT *Amsterdam*

By Mary Del Rosario

No. 1

There are over 160 Grachten, canals, in Amsterdam—more than Venice. To make the most of exploring this city, take a canal cruise.





2

Because the city is trying to discourage cars, **parking is expensive** (about 65 euros a day). Consider taking the train and when you get there, it's best to do as the locals do and rent a bike to meander your way through the streets. Be sure to wear a helmet!

3

The Anne Frank House is a popular tourist attraction, so booking tickets online in advance guarantees an easier experience.



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4

Because the Dutch were heavily taxed on the width of their property in the 17th century, the **houses were made to be one meter wide to save money.**

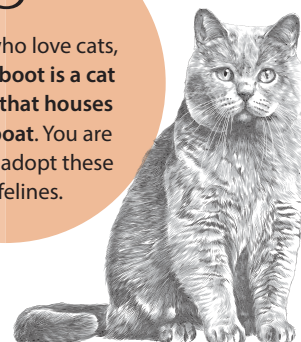
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There are over 2,500 houseboats throughout the city, some of which are rentable Airbnbs.



6

For those who love cats, **De Poezenboot is a cat sanctuary that houses cats on a boat.** You are allowed to adopt these furry felines.



SEVEN

Looking for coffee and cake at the coffee shops? Check what kind of shop you're headed into, as **many coffee shops sell primarily cannabis.**

IX

If visiting the Keukenhof gardens during this time of the year, it's possible to take the train or bus from Amsterdam to the gardens. If taking the bus for the Tour & Tickets hop & go option, it departs at De Ruijterkade 34 and will cost 37.50 euros.



8

However, if you're looking for a pastry to go with your coffee, **try a stroopwafel**, two thin waffles that are sandwiched together with a gooey caramel filling in the center.



Albert Cuyyp market is the **largest market in Amsterdam** and houses many items ranging from books to tulip bulbs.





POFFERTJES

By Anna Leigh Bagiackas

If you ever get to attend a festival or fair in the Netherlands,

there is a good chance you will come across a stand selling warm mini Dutch pancakes, known as poffertjes. Although they are similar to other pancakes, these tiny versions are made of a yeasted batter and need to sit prior to cooking up and enjoying. Another unique quality? One of the most important ingredients for poffertjes won't be listed in the ingredient list: the poffertjes pan. This special cast iron pan has shallow indentations to create the bite-sized pancakes. If you can't find one, some cooks use the Danish aebleskiver pan, filling only a small portion of the larger indentations. You can also simply use a regular nonstick pan, spooning smaller amounts of the batter than regular pancakes. These mini Dutch pancakes are traditionally made with buckwheat flour, and if you have access to this flour, try it out for a more authentic version.

The list of ingredients you can serve with these pancakes is truly endless: powdered sugar, syrup, strawberries, whipped cream, jam, Nutella or speculoos spread. All you need is an imagination and an appetite!

Poffertjes

Start to finish: Approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes
Serves: 4

2 1/4 teaspoons active dry yeast
1 1/2 cups lukewarm whole milk
1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
Pinch salt
1 egg
Butter for greasing the pan, melted

In a small bowl, sprinkle yeast over milk and stir to combine. Allow to sit for 5 to 10 minutes, until the yeast is frothy.

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar and salt. Mix in the yeast-milk mixture and the egg until smooth. Cover with a towel or plastic and allow to rest about 1 hour, until bubbly and risen.

Place poffertjes pan (or other pan) over medium heat and brush the cavities with melted butter.

Transfer the risen batter to a piping bag or large Ziplock bag with a small corner snipped off. When pan is hot, pipe a small amount of batter, about 1 tablespoon, into the cavities of the pan.

Cook until bottoms are golden and bubbles form on the tops. Using a chopstick, knitting needle or toothpick, flip pancakes to cook on the other side. Once cooked, remove to serving dish and repeat with remaining batter, greasing cavities again as needed. Serve immediately with your choice of toppings! ■

(This recipe was adapted from Tara's Multicultural Table.)



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