

# MODERN KOSHER

Global Flavors, New Traditions



**MICHAEL AARON GARDINER**

*RIZZOLI*  
NEW YORK



**T**his dish is the mash-up of two prototypical Jewish elements and two that definitely don't seem to be likely suspects. But the acidity and sweetness of the pickled blackberries combine with the piquant quality of the wasabi and rich sweetness of the cream to perfectly complement the latkes and smoked salmon.

While the latkes may be a classical Jewish ingredient, the technique I use here is anything but. Instead of grating all the ingredients and then frying them together, I use a more typical hash brown technique and parboil the potatoes before grating them. Then I put them (mixed with the onion) in a ring mold and lightly press them using the bottom of a wine glass. This technique allows for greater precision and a more even cook. It also helps prevent an experience most Jews have had at least once at a Hanukkah supper: thin, gorgeous, delicious-looking latkes that fall apart as mom tries to serve you from the platter. Even if you don't use the rest of the recipe, definitely try that technique.

## LATKES WITH SMOKED SALMON, PICKLED BLACKBERRY, AND WASABI CREAM

**SERVES 6 (MAKES 18 LATKES)**

### **FOR THE WASABI CREAM:**

**¼ cup sour cream**  
**1 teaspoon wasabi paste**  
**1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar**

### **FOR THE LATKES:**

**2 medium waxy potatoes (1½ to 1¾ pounds), unpeeled**  
**1 medium onion, finely grated**  
**4 large eggs**  
**1 tablespoon potato starch**  
**1 teaspoon baking powder**  
**1 teaspoon kosher salt**  
**1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**  
**Grapeseed, canola, or another neutral oil, for frying**  
**¾ pound smoked salmon lox (or, better yet, homemade gravlax), cut into 1½ by ½-inch pieces**  
**Pickled Blackberries (page 180)**

**TO MAKE THE WASABI CREAM:** In a small bowl, whisk together the sour cream, wasabi paste, and vinegar until combined. This can be made up to a day ahead, covered, and refrigerated until ready to use.

**TO MAKE THE LATKES:** Place the potatoes in a large saucepan, add cold water to cover, and bring to a boil over high heat. Ready an ice bath while the water boils. Cook the potatoes until they are just tender and can be easily pierced with a sharp knife, 15 to 20 minutes. Drain and immediately transfer the potatoes to the ice bath for at least 5 minutes. Once cooled, drain and dry the potatoes (do not peel) and transfer to the refrigerator, uncovered (so the potatoes dry), for at least 1 hour and up to overnight.

Using a food processor fitted with the shredding disk or the large holes on a box grater, shred the potatoes and transfer to a large bowl. Add the grated onion, eggs, potato starch, baking powder, salt, and pepper and mix to combine.

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until just shimmering. Pat 2 to 3 tablespoons (depending on the size latke you want) of the latke mixture into a small disk and

*(continued)*

fry in the hot oil, about 2 minutes per side, to test for seasoning and adjust accordingly. Form the remaining mixture into latkes just as you did the tester. It is best to form the latkes just before you cook them. If you want less rustic and more precisely shaped latkes, scoop the mixture into a 3-inch ring mold (or a clean and empty tuna can with the bottom cut out), then use the bottom of a white wine glass to lightly pat it down. Place the formed latkes on a parchment-lined baking sheet as you make them.

To fry the latkes, heat the skillet over medium-high heat until hot, then add two tablespoons oil to the hot skillet and swirl to coat the entire pan. Working quickly, add up to four latkes per batch to the pan and cook until they are nicely browned, about 2 to 3 minutes per side. If using the ring molds, slide a spatula under the bottom of the latke-filled ring mold and use tongs to transfer the assembly to the pan. Flip the ring mold latkes using the tongs, then press down using the wine glass bottom. As the latkes are cooked, transfer them to a parchment-lined baking sheet.

**TO SERVE:** Place up to 3 latkes on each plate (depending on whether you're serving them as appetizers, a main course, or just want more of some of the best food Hannukah has to offer). Fold a piece of lox in half and place it on each latke. Add a dollop of the wasabi cream and a single pickled blackberry. Repeat with the remaining latkes.

**NOTE:** For a more formal presentation, serve the latkes with the wasabi cream and pickled blackberries, adding a rosette of thinly sliced lox, one pickled onion (page 177), and a sprinkling of edible blossoms or flowers.

use these in the Latkes with Smoked Salmon, Pickled Blackberry, and Wasabi Cream (page 33), but they would be excellent in a salad, on a morning bagel, or as a garnish (or even in a sauce) for meats. In fact, the same basic techniques in this recipe would work equally well for other berries, like raspberries or blueberries.

## PICKLED BLACKBERRIES

**MAKES ABOUT 1 QUART**

**10 whole black peppercorns**  
**2 allspice berries**  
**2 juniper berries**  
**1 dried árbol chile, stemmed**  
**1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and thinly sliced**  
**1 bay leaf**  
**6 tablespoons sugar**  
**3 tablespoons salt**  
**2 cups apple cider vinegar**  
**1 shallot, thinly sliced horizontally**  
**1 sprig thyme**  
**1 pound blackberries (about 3¼ cups)**

Using a mortar and pestle, lightly crush the peppercorns, allspice berries, juniper berries, chile, ginger, and bay leaf. Combine the crushed spices with the sugar and salt in a large bowl and add the vinegar and 2 cups of water. Whisk to combine. Transfer to a medium saucepan, add the shallots and thyme, and bring just to a boil over high heat, stirring to make sure the solids are fully dissolved. Transfer back to the bowl and let cool completely.

Add the blackberries to a sanitized 1-quart glass jar. Strain the brine and pour it over the berries to cover. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 week before serving. The pickled blackberries will keep, refrigerated, for up to 3 months.