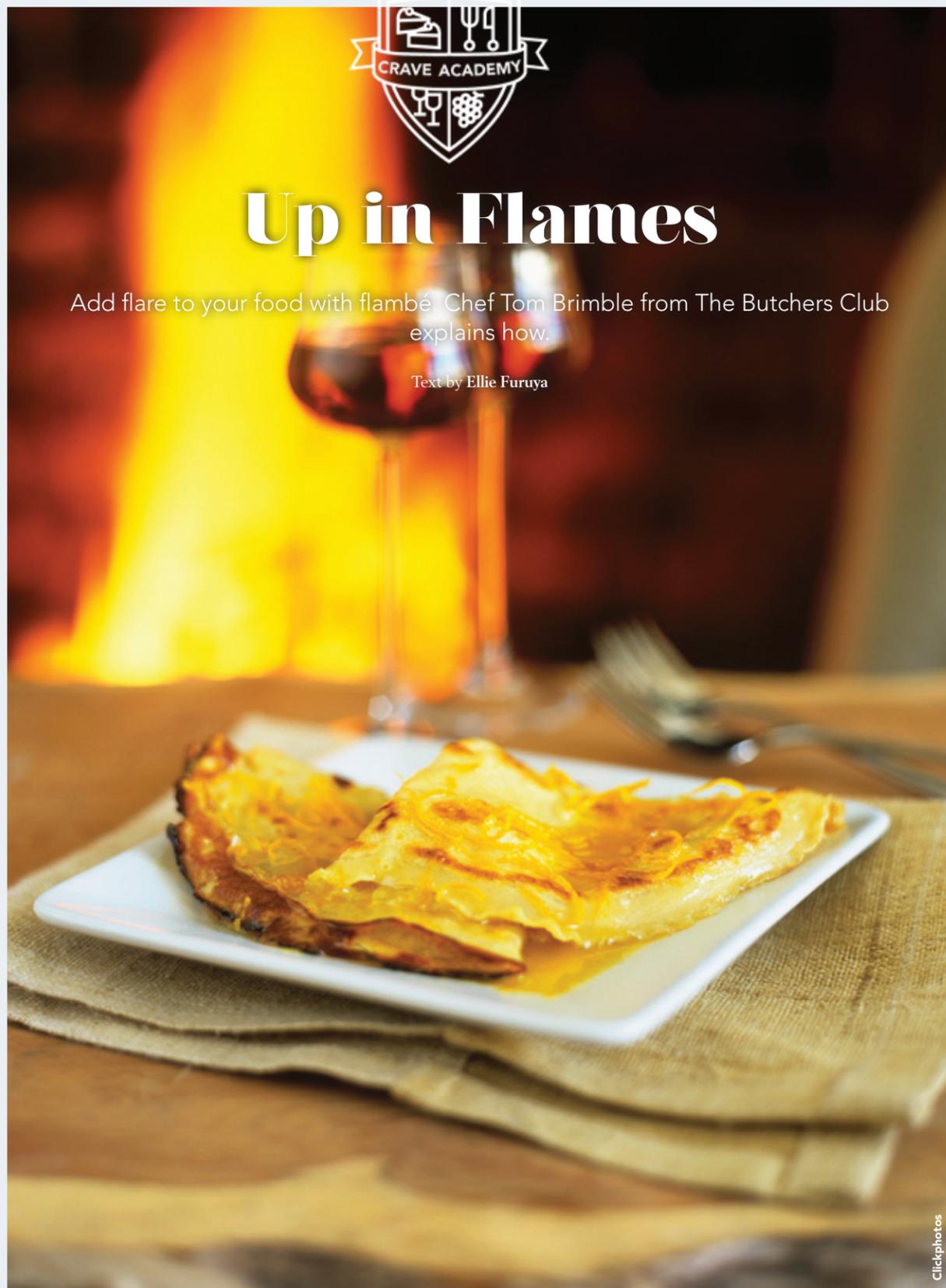




Up in Flames

Add flare to your food with flambé. Chef Tom Brimble from The Butchers Club explains how.

Text by Ellie Furuya



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Tom Brimble

Head chef, The Butchers Club

Tom Brimble joined The Butchers Club Deli as head chef in June. He is classically trained with a modernist approach to technique and presentation honed over 19 years in the industry. He has worked as executive chef de cuisine at Maxims Casino Club in Kensington, London.

Crêpes Suzette

Ingredients

(Makes 15 to 16 crêpes)

For the crêpes

Plain flour, sifted (110g)
Salt (a pinch)
Eggs (2)
Milk (200ml) mixed with water (75ml)
Butter (50g)
Medium orange, zest only (1)
Caster sugar (1 tbsp)

For the sauce

Orange juice (150ml)
Medium orange, zest only (1)
Small lemon, zest and juice (1)
Caster sugar (1 tbsp)
Grand Marnier, Cointreau or Brandy (3 tbsp)
Extra Grand Marnier for flaming

Steps

1. Add the flour and salt to a mixing bowl, make a well in centre of the flour, break eggs into the well, and whisk. Gradually add small quantities of the milk and water mixture, whisking until batter has the consistency of thin cream.
2. In a pan, melt the butter and whisk 2 tbsp of the melted butter into the batter. Use the rest to lubricate the pan, spreading it with kitchen paper.
3. Add the orange zest and caster sugar to the batter.
4. Heat the pan until it is very hot, then reduce the heat to medium. Drop ½ tbsp of batter into the pan, swirling the pan until the base is evenly coated. After about half a minute, when the pancake is tinged gold, lift the edge with a palette knife and flip over. Slide it out of the pan onto the plate.
5. Make the sauce by mixing together orange juice and zest, and lemon zest and juice, liqueur and caster sugar. Heat butter in a pan, pour in the sauce and heat gently. Place a crêpe in the pan, allow to heat and fold twice into a triangular shape.
6. Pour some liqueur into a ladle, place it over a gas flame or the edge of a hotplate to heat up, and set it alight. Pour the flames over the crêpes and serve on warmed plates.

What is flambéing and why do chefs do it?

Flambé is a cooking procedure in which alcohol is added to a hot pan to create a burst of flames. Flambéing is often associated with the tableside presentation of liqueur-drenched dishes such as Bananas Foster, Cherries Jubilee or Crêpes Suzette, when the alcohol is ignited in a flare of blue-tinged flame. Flambéing is also a step in making coq au vin and other dishes and sauces before they are brought to the table. By rapidly burning off the volatile alcohol, flambéing can infuse a dish with additional aromas or top notes, and moderates the harshness of raw, high-proof spirits.

Which liquors should I use for different dishes?

Pick an alcohol that has a complementary flavour profile to the main or secondary ingredients. For example, if we were working with oranges, mandarins or clementines, we would use an orange- or citrus-based liqueur such as Grand Marnier, Cointreau or Filfar Mandarin Liqueur. Pairing the alcohol and ingredients helps create a greater depth of flavour and a more intense profile.

What errors should a home cook be wary of when flambéing?

First, make sure you know what is above you and your pan – you don't want to burn your ceiling! Second, remove all flammables from the cooking area. Third, keep a frying pan lid close, so you can smother the flames if they get out of control. Here's a fun fact: the second most common cause of house fires in France, after electrical faults, is flambé. So be safe.

Is there any specialist equipment, such as a type of pan?

Always use a thick-based frying pan that's not too heavy so you can manoeuvre it with ease. For safety, never add alcohol to a pan on a burner, and use a long fireplace match to ignite.

What is your favourite flambé dish?

Crêpes Suzette is a classic and one of the first pastry dishes a chef learns in culinary school. It is a dish close to the heart of any classically trained chef. It tastes delicious, too.