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Allen Tate

Co-owner and crepe maker, the French Market

By [Rose Kennedy](#) (Contact)

Wednesday, November 19, 2008

Are you French?

No, Scottish. My family's been here for 200 years or so now, we're one of the first families of Tennessee. But my wife Susan and I spent two winters in Paris in the Saint-Germain-des-Pres, and there was this one crepe shop at the Notre-Dame-des-Champs Metro stop—it was a stand, really, and it always had a line of people waiting around the corner. We were doing steel sculpture at the time, traveling to art shows, and we always said if we ever had our own gallery, we'd serve crepes like that street vendor.

Are the crepes French?

We found the manufacturer that supplies the majority of street vendors in Paris and called them up. They said, "Oui, oui," and the next thing you know, we had a rep in New York. It takes one or two weeks to arrive from France, and then they FedEx us 50-pound bags—it's street-vendor batter, and they don't have kitchens, so it's made to mix with water.

Are they hard to make?

We practiced for two weeks before we tested them at a private party. It's complicated and it takes wrist action. You're working with a two-inch wide spatula that's 18-inches long to pick up an 18-inch circular pancake. We got solid cast-iron crepe burners French-made, and they take two hours to heat. The hardest part is getting the batter to spin and coat the entire surface of the griddle before it cooks.

Do they ever stick to the ceiling?

No, we don't flip them that high. But they break a lot. If you wait too long, they get too toasted and snap in half. And they end up on the floor every now and then.

Do you ever tear them when you roll the filling?

IHOP rolls crepes, we fold them—like the French.



Allen Tate: Co-owner and crepe maker, the French Market

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