

Rough Puff Pastry

By David Larkin

I said I would do a pastry method this month, the one I use for Steak and Kidney Pie and now is a good time as I just made one of these pies for our St. Patrick's Day pot-luck at St Philip's.

In the late 1940s my mother was faced with learning how to cook at the age of 50 when she returned to England from India after WW II. She decided she was only going to bother with learning one kind of pastry and chose Rough Puff Pastry, a decision her family had cause to appreciate. You can reasonably argue that nowadays one can buy ready-made puff pastry in the supermarket, so why make your own? Well, I think you can do at least as well as the commercial product and you will find making this pastry a rewarding skill. And I think it tastes better. We had a workshop on making this pastry at St Philip's and it was well received.

You will require 1 lb. of all-purpose flour (3 1/5 cups); 1/2 tsp. salt; 3/4 lb. of fat (either 1/2 lb. of Crisco **and** 1/4 lb. of margarine **or** 3/4 lb. of butter); approx. 10 oz. (300 ml) of cold water (used as required); and 1 tsp. lemon juice.

Sift the flour and salt into a bowl, having saved about 2/5 cup for the board and rolling pin. Cut the fat up into pieces about the size of a walnut. To do this, I usually chop the fat into 1/4 inch slices and cut each slice into six. Put the pieces in with the flour. I always used to use Crisco and margarine but now I prefer to use only butter. It is essential that you leave the fat in these chunks - if you cut it too small you won't be making any puff pastry. Add 1 tsp. of lemon juice to the cold water. The purpose of the lemon juice is to make the pastry easier to roll out. Take a knife and slowly stir the flour and fat mix while you carefully add the cold water. Adding the water is the critical step. You must use only just enough water that all the loose flour is absorbed in the dough. Too much water and you will have a soggy ball of dough, with which it is impossible to work. You should have some water left over in your pourer, but the amount depends on the flour and the humidity. The fat will remain in chunks. A big ball will be formed. Handling this as little as possible, take it out of the bowl and place on the floured table. Make sure the rolling pin is well floured too. Roll the dough out until you have a rectangle, about 6" by 18". Fold a third of this up and cover with the remaining free third. Bang round the edges of the 'packet' with the rolling pin to seal it, and then thump three times in a row with the pin across the width of the packet. Rotate the packet 90° and roll out again until you have achieved

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