

The recipe below is from our special Christmas page at www.barossanewsonline.com/eats'n'drinks.html

Fruit Mince Pies



Makes 24

Apart from the ingredients below, you'd need patty pans enough to make 24 pies, plus you'll need a 7 centimetre pastry cutter and a 6 centimetre pastry cutter, a rolling pin, some plastic wrap and some Glad Bake paper.

Ingredients:

The Mix:

1 tablespoon of finely chopped mixed peel (we use Angas Park's blend of oranges and Lemons, available at IGA supermarkets, or Coles or Woolworths).

3/4 cup (125 g) of raisins, chopped

3/4 cup (120 g) of sultanas

1/2 cup (75 g) currants

1/3 cup (55 g) of dried dates, chopped

1/3 cup (60 g) of prunes

2 tablespoons of brown sugar

1 medium (150 g) Granny Smith apple, grated

1/3 cup (80ml) Grand Marnier liqueur, or orange juice

1 teaspoon of mixed spice (we use 'Herbies' mixed spice, available at continental delis)

1/2 teaspoon of finely graded orange rind

1 1/2 tablespoon of plum jam (we use Beerenberg from the Adelaide Hills - available at supermarkets or your favorite continental deli)

Method:

Combine the dried fruit, sugar and apple, Grand Marnier, spice, rind and jam in a large bowl. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and store in a cool dark place for 3 days or longer (not refrigerated). Stir the mixture every day.

Pastry:

This is a sweet shortcrust pastry. We find this recipe below the easiest we've ever used. The pastry just comes together, is very pliable and doesn't crumble. It has the texture of 'play dough' and is very very easy to use.

Makes 500 grams. This pastry can be frozen for up to two months.

Preparation time: 20 minutes

140 g of cold unsalted butter (we use 'Lurpak red', available at some supermarkets or at continental delis)

100 g icing sugar

pinch of salt (we use Malden Salt available at supermarkets)

1 egg, lightly whisked

230 g plain flour

20 g of cornflour (this makes the pastry nicely crisp when cooked)

egg wash (1 egg yolk mixed with one tablespoon of milk)

60 g castor sugar

Method:

Put the butter and icing sugar in an electric mixer bowl and beat until lightly creamed. (we used a Kitchen Aid for this, but you can use a electric hand beater.)

Add the salt and drizzle in the egg a little at a time, beating until it comes together as a smooth mass.

Sift on the flour and cornflour and mix briefly until it just comes together. (If you're using a hand beater, it's OK to put the beater down while you add the flour a little bit at a time before using the beater again. Don't dump all the flour into the bowl at one time otherwise you'll end up in a mess.)

Drop the dough onto a lightly floured surface and use your hands to shape it into a smooth flattened ball. Wrap it in plastic wrap and pop it into the fridge for 45 minutes before rolling it out. (You put it into the fridge to 'rest' the pastry, stopping it from shrinking when the pastry is being cooked.)

Grease your patty pans with butter.

How to make the pies:

Roll out the pastry to about 2 mm thickness to do this, place the dough onto a length of Glad Bake, then place another piece of Glad Bake over the top, then roll it out with your rolling pin. Using the 'glad Bake stops the pastry sticking to your work surface and/or rolling pin.

Use the 7 cm pastry cutter to cut out your pie bases, and use the 6cm pastry cutter for the pie 'lids'. You can roll the offcuts back together into a ball - but remember to put that back into the fridge to keep it cool till you're ready to use it again.

This is because pastry gets hot quickly and the butter in it starts to melt, ruining the pastry. Work quickly, and keep the pastry cool as much as possible is the best advice.

Form the pasty bases into the patty pan moulds and fill them with the fruit mince.

Then lightly brush the borders of the lids with cold water, and place them on top of the filled mince pies.

Gently press the edges of the base pastry and the lid pastry together. Put all this into the fridge for 20 minutes to rest.

While this is happening, pre-heat your oven to 180 degrees F.

Once your oven has got to this temperature, brush the pie tops with the egg wash.

Then bake the pies for 20 minutes until pale golden brown.

Take the pies out of the oven and sprinkle them with castor sugar, then return them to the oven to glaze.

Immediately un-mould the pies before they cool in the tin and place them on a wire rack to cool.

You're done!

Serve them at any time over the Christmas/Holiday period with a drizzle of thickened cream (these mince pies are suitable for freezing). Serve them warm if you like. If they're fresh, just pop them in the oven for a few minutes to heat them up.

If you've frozen them, zap them in the microwave for 30-40 seconds BUT finish them off in a pre-heated oven at 180 degrees F for about 5 or so minutes. This pastry is not for heating by microwave only -- the microwave only warms the mixture - use the oven to finish off and 'crisp up' the pastry.

Wait for the rave reviews!