

SMOKED SALMON PASTRIES

Makes about 15.

By Dennis W. Viau; one of my original ideas.

If you don't mind working with phyllo dough and Béchamel sauce, you can make these elegant and delicious pastries without a lot of difficulty. They would be appropriate as an appetizer or for a stylish luncheon buffet.

Ingredients:

1½ tablespoons butter; preferably clarified
2½ tablespoons all-purpose flour; divided
1½ cups (355ml) milk
⅛ teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg (or from a spice bottle)
⅛ teaspoon white pepper
3 ounces (85g) peas; fresh or frozen
1 ounce (28g) Gruyère cheese; finely shredded
5 ounces smoked salmon; chopped fine
Salt to taste
1 package (1 pound/454g) phyllo dough sheets
¼ cup butter; melted (more as needed)
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil (more as needed)
Sesame seeds for garnish

Directions:

For the Béchamel:

Make a roux by melting 1½ tablespoons butter in a small saucepan and adding the flour. Stir over medium heat about 1 minute. Remove from the heat and allow to cool a few minutes. Stir in the nutmeg and white pepper. Add the milk, combine, and return to the heat. Bring to a boil and reduce the heat to low. Stir constantly for 10 minutes, until the sauce reaches the “coats a spoon” state. Remove from the heat and cover the surface carefully with plastic wrap to prevent a skin developing. Set aside until needed.

Melt the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter in a second saucepan and add the peas. Cover and let cook over low heat for six minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool.

Assemble the filling:

Combine the Béchamel, Gruyère cheese, peas, and smoked salmon in a bowl. Taste for salt.

Assemble the pastries:

Combine the ¼ cup melted butter and the olive oil in a small bowl. Place a sheet of phyllo dough on a work surface. Brush the surface lightly with the butter/oil mixture. Place a second sheet of phyllo dough on top and brush along the long center with oil. Place a generous spoonful of filling in the center toward one end of the pastry. Fold in one of the long sides to cover the filling. Brush with fat and fold in the other side (the pastry will be folded in thirds the long way). Brush again with fat. Fold over the end to enclose the pastry, then fold up the pastry, alternating the angle to form a triangle, wrapping up the filling until you finish at the other end. Arrange on a baking dish with the final flap of pastry on the bottom. Brush with fat and sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Bake in the upper third of a 400°F (200°C) oven for 5 minutes. Place under the broiler for 2 to 3 minutes longer, watching closely, for additional browning. Serve warm.

The **Step By Step** guide begins on the following page.



STEP-BY-STEP

1



Assemble your *mise en place*. Although I have a small glass bowl with grated nutmeg (lower-left), I included my grater and nutmeg pod in the photo. The box is labelled “fillo;” it’s actually “phyllo” dough. To confuse the matter further, you might also see it spelled filo. Whatever...

2



Start the Béchamel by making a roux. Melt the flour in a saucepan and stir in the flour. Keep stirring so that it cooks evenly and doesn't scorch. It only takes about a minute to cook the flour.

3



The various colored sauces get their color from the roux. The longer you cook the flour in the butter, the darker it will get. For Béchamel we need a white roux, which means only cooking the flour, not browning it. Cook it a little longer and you'll have a blond roux. I prefer to let the roux cool for a few minutes before I add the white pepper and ground nutmeg, which I find tend to lump up if the roux is too hot.

4



Some recipes say to heat the milk and then add it to the roux. I don't. I just let the roux cool a little and then add the milk, no matter what temperature it might be. Then I return the pan to the heat and bring it to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and cook it, stirring constantly, for 10 minutes. When it starts cooking the mixture will be thin; it will not coat a spoon (or in this case, a spatula).

5



After 10 minutes of cooking and stirring, the sauce will be velvety smooth and thick enough to leave a thin coating. This sauce is done. Remove from the heat.

6



Béchamel will quickly develop a skin on the surface when it is removed from the heat. To protect the sauce, you can carefully (it's hot) press a piece of plastic wrap onto the surface. Some chefs coat the surface with a thin layer of melted butter.

7



Heat the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter in a saucepan and add the peas. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, for about six minutes. Then remove from the heat and set aside to cool a little.

8



With the Béchamel prepared and the peas cooked, this filling is ready to assemble. I chopped the salmon rather fine. The white mat under that red spatula is actually under the glass bowl, not inside of it. I use that mat when I am in front of the video camera because it keeps the bowl from making noise.

9



Here is the combined filling. This step is done.

10



This filling is a little on the “wet” side, so a single layer of phyllo dough won’t be enough. The filling will soften the dough and break through unless you handle it very carefully. Place a sheet of phyllo dough on your work surface and brush it with the melted butter/olive oil mixture. Place a second sheet on top and oil that sheet as well. The two sheets combined will be strong enough to contain the filling.

11

Place a little of the filling, a good heaping tablespoon, in the center at one end of the sheet. Knowing that I am going to roll this pastry up in a triangle, I try to arrange the filling in roughly a triangular shape.

12

Turn up the end of the sheet to encase the filling. Brush along the center with a little of the butter/oil mixture.

13

Now bring in one side, folding about a third of the phyllo over onto the center. Brush with butter.

14

Fold over the other side, pressing the dough down a little to form the filling into triangle. Brush again.

15

Now start rolling up the dough, changing the angle to maintain that triangle.

16

Keep going, alternating the folding angle, until you reach the other end.

17

When you're finished you should have a neat little triangular pastry.

18

Place the pastries on a baking sheet with the final end of dough underneath. Brush with the butter/oil mixture and sprinkle with sesame seeds, if desired.



I baked these at 400°F (200°C) for 5 minutes in the upper third of the oven. Then I turned on the broiler and watched them closely as they browned. They were ready to come out of the oven after being under the broiler for only 3 minutes. Let them cool a little and serve them warm.

Conclusion

This is a relatively simple pastry to make, but the final product is light, attractive, and delicious. They are delicate and mild, perfect for a fancy afternoon luncheon or to serve as appetizers before a meal.