

Be a better baker

FLAKY PASTRY

How do you make perfect, melt-in-the-mouth flaky pastry? That's the baking query tackled by this month's expert, Eric Lanlard. It's all about cold butter and a light touch



“I love flaky pastry. It's similar to rough puff pastry, but as you're not aiming for perfect layers it's even easier to make – and it has all the buttery flavour of puff. I use it for savoury bakes, as its richness can overpower

delicate puddings. Encasing sausagemeat enhanced with pâté, garlic and herbs, it makes the perfect feast for a summer picnic.”

Sausagemeat pies with flaky pastry

SERVES 8 (MAKES 4 PIES). HANDS-ON TIME 40 MIN, OVEN TIME 55 MIN, PLUS CHILLING

MAKE
AHEAD

Make the pastry in advance and keep it covered in the fridge for up to 1 day.

- 600g British free-range pork sausagemeat
- 1 large red onion, finely chopped
- 150g smooth chicken liver pâté
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- 3 fresh sage leaves, finely chopped
- 50g plain flour, plus extra to dust
- 4 thin ready-made savoury crepes or pancakes (widely available)
- 2 medium free-range egg yolks, lightly beaten

FOR THE FLAKY PASTRY

- 250g plain flour, plus extra to dust
- 280g unsalted butter (see Eric's golden rules), chilled and diced

- ½ tsp fine sea salt
- 120ml ice-cold water

1. For the pastry, put the flour, butter and salt in a medium bowl. Using a dinner knife, cut the butter into the flour until the mixture looks crumbly and the butter pieces are about the size of peas. Tip onto a clean work surface and form a well in the centre.
2. Pour in the water and work it gradually into the mixture until the pastry just comes together into a ball (don't overwork it – see Eric's golden rules). Shape into a rough square – you'll see chunks of butter in it.
3. Roll out the pastry on a lightly floured work surface with a floured rolling pin into a rough 25cm x 15cm rectangle (use the side of a ruler to help shape it). As you roll, add more flour as needed underneath and on top of the pastry so it doesn't stick.
4. Brush any excess flour from the top of the pastry, then fold it in thirds like a letter, dusting after each fold.
5. Give the dough a quarter turn, then repeat steps 3 and 4. Chill the pastry for 30 minutes.
6. Repeat the rolling and folding process twice more (you do it 4 times in total, and the rectangles should get neater every time).
7. After the last fold, tap the top and sides of the dough with the rolling pin to give it an even, square shape. Put on a plate, cover, then refrigerate for at least an hour before using.

8. Meanwhile, prepare the filling. Put the sausagemeat, onion, pâté, garlic, chopped sage and 50g flour in a large bowl and mix. Season well with salt and pepper, then divide into 4 equal balls and chill for 1 hour.
 9. Heat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/gas 6. Wrap each sausagemeat ball in a crepe (this will soak up any juices and keep the pastry crisp – the crepes break easily but don't worry too much about making them fit perfectly). Brush all over with some of the beaten egg.
 10. Divide the pastry into 4 equal balls and roll out on a lightly floured surface into circles big enough to encase a ball of filling. If the chilled pastry is hard and a struggle to roll, leave it at room temperature for 10-15 minutes before using.
 11. Put a sausagemeat ball in the centre of each pastry circle. Brush the pastry edges with a little more egg, then wrap it around the ball, enclosing it. Put the pies on 2 baking sheets lined with baking paper, with the seams underneath, and press down slightly to flatten them.
 12. Brush all over with the rest of the egg (see Eric's golden rules) then, with a sharp knife, lightly score a star shape on top. Make a small hole in the top for steam to escape, then bake for 25 minutes. Turn the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas 4 and bake for 30 minutes or until the pastry is golden.
- PER SERVING** 649kcal, 46.4g fat (24.4g saturated), 7.7g protein, 35.3g carbs (3.7g sugars), 0.8g salt, 1.9g fibre
- Look out for Eric at the Cake & Bake Show in Harrogate, 19-21 June; thecakeandbakeshow.co.uk

Eric's golden rules

- Use light, quick movements when working the pastry, so it doesn't get too warm, and work in as cool an environment as possible (don't turn the oven on until the pastry is in the fridge in step 7).
- If the butter in the pastry becomes sticky when you're working it, chill for 30-60 minutes, then continue.
- Buy a good quality unsalted butter with lots of flavour.
- Brush the seams of the pastry with beaten egg to help seal the pies and stop the filling oozing out in the oven.



NEXT MONTH

Top patissier Claire Clark reveals the secret of light, fluffy scones

FOOD STYLING: LOTTIE COVELL. PHOTOGRAPHS: MAJJA SMEND. STYLING: DAVINA PERKINS



Do you have a question to ask or a baking tip to share?

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