

KATHY NEIMAN'S

Tourtière Puffs



Yields: 48 puffs

These two-bite puff appetizers pack a lot of flavour. The warm spices are reminiscent of tourtière meat pies traditionally served during the holiday season. They are best served warm out of the oven. They can be made and baked ahead of time, then thawed and heated as guests arrive. This recipe may seem fussy and time consuming but it is well worth it.

Ingredients

- 5 oz or 150g lean ground pork
- 5 oz or 150g extra lean ground beef, bison or venison or other game
- 2 packages of all butter puff pastry sheets (450g) or 900g of home-made puff or rough puff
- 1 egg (for egg wash on pastry)
- 1 medium onion chopped (about 3/4 cup)
- 1 tablespoon of butter or olive oil
- 1.5 tablespoons of minced garlic (can be from a jar)
- 1 medium potato cubed (for mashing to act as a binder)

Spice mix:

(measure and place in bowl so it is ready to use later)

- 1/2 tsp. fresh ground black pepper
- 1 1/2 tsp. dried thyme leaves
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- 1 tsp. ground sage
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp. dried mustard
- 1/2 tsp. allspice
- 1/4 tsp. ground cloves
- 2 tsp. dried parsley flakes
- 1/2 tsp. cayenne depending on taste
- kosher salt depending on taste (season after mixture is assembled)
- 3 tbsp. of nigella seed or sesame seed (optional)

Method

Prepare the filling first as it will need to thoroughly cool before assembling puffs. It can be made the day ahead.

1. Peel and rough chop potato and place in a saucepan with 1 1/2 cups of water. Simmer until tender. Drain but reserve water for later use.
2. Mash potatoes so they are smooth. For best results use a potato ricer. Set aside in a large bowl.
3. Over medium heat, saute chopped onion and butter or oil in a large pan until soft and golden brown, approximately 7-10 minutes taking care not to burn.
4. Add in minced garlic, stir and continue to saute for another 2 minutes.
5. Add spice mix to pan to bloom the spices and release the flavour. Stir in pan with onions for 30 seconds. Remove from pan with spatula and place in bowl.
6. Turn pan heat to a medium high. Add the ground meat combination and fry until thoroughly cooked. Break apart chunks as meat cooks. There will be moisture that comes out of the meat. Continue to fry until the crumble is browned and the moisture has evaporated and the ground meat starts to sizzle in its own fat. There will be minimal fat in the pan. It can be left.
7. Add the onion mixture back into the pan with the ground meat. Add in the reserved potato water. Stir thoroughly and reduce heat to a simmer. Cook until liquid has mostly evaporated, approximately 15 minutes. This will allow flavours to meld. You will hear a crackle sound as the meat mixture begins to fry.
8. Remove from heat and add it to the large bowl containing the mashed potatoes. Mix thoroughly and season with salt to taste. The meat filling should resemble a very soft cookie dough. If it is crumbly, it is too dry. Add a tablespoon or two of water at a time and mix.
9. Place the meat mixture in the fridge to cool thoroughly before use.



Assembly of Puffs

1. Place the meat mixture in the fridge to cool thoroughly before use.
2. Thaw puff pastry dough according to package instructions. Do not use the microwave to thaw dough. Using puff pastry in pre-formed sheets is the easiest. There is no rolling of dough or waste. Keep puff sheets in fridge as you are preparing the others.
3. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Prep 2 cookie sheets with parchment paper or silicone mats.
4. Place a sheet of parchment on counter top and flip open one puff sheet. With a ruler, mark off 2 inch increments down top and sides then cut with a pizza cutter or knife. Sheets usually come in 10" squares so each sheet will yield 25 little squares and make a dozen puffs.
5. With a teaspoon, form little mounds of filling and place on a puff square. Take another 2" square and place over top. Press to seal around edges. If edges are too dry and do not seal, dip your finger in a small amount of water and run around edges, press to seal. They will resemble ravioli.
6. Place little puffs on cookie sheet lined with parchment and brush on egg wash. Sprinkle with nigella seeds or sesame seeds if desired.
7. Place on the middle rack of a 400 degree oven. Bake for 20 minutes or until puffed and golden brown.

Repeat with additional sheets. This recipe will make 4 dozen puffs. The puffs can be made and baked ahead of time and heated in the oven before serving. It is best to bake them then freeze the baked puffs.

Notes From Kathy

Store bought puff pastry varies in quality and texture. Do not assume that a major brand name pastry yields a better result. Avoid those made with modified palm and canola margarine. Look for puff made with butter as that is often a great value and yields better results. Good puff will be airy and flaky. Sometimes it is hard to predict how it will act. Your puffs may not be totally uniform, that is okay. Embrace the gnarley.

A word about ground spices: how old are yours? The flavor of ground dried spices diminishes year after year. If you cannot remember the last time you used something or your bottle looks 20 years old, it is best to replace with new. If spices are so old, they may not have any flavor and affect the success of your recipe. Spices can be expensive. Sometimes international food stores and bulk food shops will have better prices than the small bottles found in grocery stores.

The puffs can be made and baked a few days ahead then frozen in an airtight container. Thaw on counter for an hour then simply reheat in a 350 degree oven for a few minutes. Keep an eye on them being careful not to burn.

These puffs pair nicely with [Spicy Apple Cranberry Chutney](#).