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CREAM PUFF
WITH CHOCOLATE
PASTRY CREAM
(RECIPES, P. 68)

THE GASTRONAUT FILES

diy pastry puffs

Airy cream-puff dough, a.k.a. pâte à choux, is the base for gougères, éclairs and many other exquisite treats. Here, a step-by-step tutorial in mastering the classic from baker Eric Kayser.

RECIPES BY ERIC KAYSER PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHNNY MILLER

WITH DOZENS OF APPLICATIONS, *pâte à choux* is one of the most versatile recipes of the pastry chef. The eggy dough, which puffs into moist, air-filled balls, is the basis for éclairs, profiteroles, cream puffs and many more classic sweet pastries, as well as savory items like gougères and *pommes dauphine* (airy mashed-potato balls). The recipe for *choux* looks simple (cook flour with water and butter, then beat in some eggs), but success depends on understanding its nuances. For help, we turned to fifth-generation master baker Eric Kayser, who says that *choux*-based pastries are among the best-selling items at La

Maison Kayser, his bakery with 80 locations around the world (he opened his first US branch in New York City last August). According to Kayser, the secret to mastering *choux* is to pay close attention to the consistency and texture of the dough as you're making it. "It should slowly hang and stretch from the spatula in thick ribbons," he says, stressing that it may be necessary to add more or less egg to achieve the right texture. Once you master the basic *choux* dough, try some of Kayser's favorite ways to use it: cream puffs, *chouquettes* (puffs topped with pearled sugar) and cheesy gougères. —Daniel Gritzer

Pâte à Choux

ACTIVE: 20 MIN; TOTAL: 1 HR 15 MIN
MAKES ABOUT 3 DOZEN CHOUX PUFFS

- 1½ cups water
- 1 stick plus 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, cut into cubes
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 200 grams all-purpose flour (about 1½ cups)
- 8 large eggs

1. Preheat the oven to 400°. Line 2 large baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In a large saucepan, combine the water, butter, sugar and salt and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to moderate. Add the flour all at once and stir vigorously with a wooden spoon until a tight dough forms and pulls away from the side of the pan, 2 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat.
3. In a bowl, beat 7 eggs and add to the dough in four batches, stirring vigorously between additions until the eggs are completely incorporated and the pastry is smooth. The dough should be glossy and very slowly hang, stretch and fall from the spoon in thick ribbons. If necessary, beat in the remaining egg.
4. Transfer the dough to a piping bag fitted with a ½-inch plain tip. Pipe 1½-inch mounds onto the baking sheets, leaving 1 inch between them. Proceed as directed at right.



CHOUQUETTES

DON'T WAIT

"Eat your choux the same day, the sooner the better," advises Kayser.

3 GREAT CHOUX RECIPES

1. **CHOUQUETTES** Sprinkle each mound with ½ teaspoon pearl sugar (decorating sugar). Bake for 30 minutes, until browned and puffed.

2. **GOUGÈRES** Sprinkle the mounds with 1 cup shredded Gruyère cheese. Bake for 30 minutes, until browned and puffed.

3. **CREAM PUFFS** Bake the *choux* for 30 minutes, until browned and puffed. Let cool completely. Using a serrated knife, halve each puff horizontally. Fill each one with 2 tablespoons sweetened whipped cream and 3 fresh raspberries, or 2 tablespoons chocolate pastry cream (see below). Replace the tops and dust with confectioners' sugar.

CHOCOLATE PASTRY CREAM In a bowl, whisk 6 egg yolks, 9 tablespoons sugar, 1½ tablespoons flour and 1¼ teaspoons cornstarch. In a saucepan, bring 2½ cups milk and 1¼ cups heavy cream to a simmer; whisk ½ cup into the eggs, then whisk the mixture into the saucepan. Cook over low heat, whisking, until thick. Off the heat, whisk in 1¼ cups chopped dark chocolate until melted. Transfer to a bowl, cover with plastic and refrigerate until cool.

Step by Step: Making Pâte à Choux

1 COMBINE Bring the water, cubed butter, sugar and salt to a boil in a saucepan, then add the flour all at once.



2 STIR WELL Cook and dry the mixture, stirring briskly, until a tight dough forms and pulls away from the pan.



3 ADD EGGS Working in batches, add the beaten eggs to the dough, stirring vigorously between additions.



4 PIPE Use a pastry bag to pipe mounds of dough onto parchment-lined baking sheets, leaving 1 inch between them.