

Petits choux salés

Ingredients:

Makes 6 x 12 cm éclairs & 6 x choux puffs or
20 gougères

Choux paste

40g butter
125mls cold water
75g bread or plain flour,
(or for GF we use rice flour and a pinch of
baking powder)
2 medium eggs, beaten
Salt to taste

Beetroot cured salmon with horseradish crème fraiche

Fresh salmon (allow 50g per person)
2 tbs sugar & 1 tbs salt for the cure
Grated fresh beetroot, or dill or lemon zest,
optional
1 tbs of crème fraiche or whipped cream per
eclair
Horseradish or wasabi to taste
*Note : for larger whole sides of salmon, the
ratio is generally on 120 g of cure to 1 kilo of
salmon*

Pickled beetroot & fresh goat's cheese

Fresh beetroot (or pickled see below)
1 tbs soft goat's cheese per choux
Chopped chives (or red onion optional)

Beetroot glaze

Beetroot pickling liquid (your own, jar or can)
Agar-agar or arrowroot

Simple cheese gougères

50g finely grated strong cheese for gougère.
(like Gruyere, cheddar, Comte, Brebis)

Craquelin

70g butter
90g of finely grated hard cheese
90g of flour
Salt to taste



Choux pastry was traditionally used in sweet confections like profiteroles, éclairs and cream puffs. Nowadays our patisseries in France offer exotic savoury versions with interesting fillings. Most popular are ingredients like goat's cheese and beetroot, foie gras and figs, smoked salmon, asparagus – actually ingredients you might use in a vol-au-vent and those combining a sweet and savoury note!

Whether making sweet or savoury, we keep things flexible by adding a little salt and no sugar (the sweet fillings are usually enough!)

Also, very fashionable is “craquelin” which means “crispy hat”. This is a crumble type mix, rolled out very thinly and placed on top of sweet or savoury choux and then baked to give a “crazed” texture on top. The recipe for this is also included below.

Savoury fillings are infinite and up to your imagination to use as either a starter served with a small salad garnish or as a canapé.

Method:

Pre-heat the oven to 220C. Place a baking tray in the bottom of the oven, you then add water to make steam when you are ready to cook.

Put the butter, water and salt into a pan and leave over a low heat until the butter has melted. Turn up the heat until the mixture just starts to boil.

Take off the heat, add the flour and beat vigorously until the mixture is smooth and comes away from the sides of the pan (usually about a minute). It will first look like mashed potato and then become smooth and work itself into a shiny ball. Return it to a medium heat and cook out the flour for about 2-3 minutes, by folding the mixture over itself and flattening it out to ensure it cooks evenly.

Place in a bowl, spread the mixture up the sides of the bowl to cool, set aside until it is hand hot.

Beat in one egg a little at a time, until you have a smooth, glossy choux paste. Add about half of the second egg gradually, continue to beat until the texture is firm not runny, Only add the last half egg if you need it. Keep working the paste with a wooden spoon. Watch the gluten develop – it should be thick enough that the spoon stands up in the mix and be “stretchy” when you pull it between your fingers (almost like chewing gum!) **Keep any leftover egg and add a little water and salt and glaze your choux for a glossier finish*

Using a 1.5 cm nozzle, pipe into 12 cm lengths for éclairs onto a tray lined with baking paper. Or pipe or drop tablespoon size balls for profiteroles or gougères.

Bake for 15 minutes at 220C, then turn down to 180C and bake for a further 10 minutes. (We always check ours at the half way mark and turn them if necessary) Pour a glass of cold water onto a hot baking tray placed on the bottom of your oven to create more steam or use a water spray.

Check that the choux is dried out on the inside by breaking open one to test it. Cook for a further few minutes if necessary - remove from the oven and poke a small hole in the base with a skewer or cut in half with a serrated knife to release the steam. **The choux can be frozen and then refreshed in a hot oven for about 3 minutes until they become crisp again.*

Beetroot cured salmon with horseradish crème fraiche (or use smoked salmon)

Combine two tablespoons of sugar with one of flaked sea salt. Use a plastic container which is slightly larger than the salmon. We generally use this amount for up to 400 g of salmon as we don't like it to be too strong, although many recipes suggest 120 g of the cure per kilo of salmon.

You can add any flavours at this stage – e.g. fresh grated beetroot or cooked beetroot; lemon zest; finely chopped dill; a splash of gin or vodka; some crushed juniper; crushed pink peppercorns.

Lay the salmon on the salt mix, and then turn it over so you have cure on both sides. Cover loosely with cling film. Leave for about 36 hours. (I start mine in the morning and then turn it at roughly

lunch time the next day.) There will be plenty of liquid, which is the water being drawn out by the cure.

Cut it through to check that it is cured throughout – it should be firm and opaque. Brush off any excess salt and dry with kitchen paper. Wrap well and keep it in the freezer until required as it will cut best when well chilled.

For the filling, we mix a couple of tsp of hot horseradish with crème fraîche or whipped cream and a pinch of salt. (it will depend on how hot your brand is). Pipe or fill the éclairs with the cream mix, then layer on the salmon slices. Garnish with a little chopped red onion, capers or some chives or other fine herbs.

Beetroot pickle - Dissolve 30g of sugar and 15 g of salt in 50mls of mild vinegar (white wine or rice wine work really well) and 50mls of water. Bring to the boil and add the thinly sliced or cubed beetroot, allow them to cool in the pickling mix. They will keep in a jar in the fridge for a week or so. You can re-use the pickling mix a couple of times as long as you strain and boil it first.

Beetroot glaze - warm 100mls of the pickling liquid (or use liquid from a can or jar of pickled cooked beetroot). Add a sprinkling of agar-agar or use arrowroot - according to the packet instructions. Leave the jelly to set and then cut out to the shape and size of your éclair.

Asparagus filling - Cook the asparagus to your taste – the French like to boil it thoroughly, we prefer it to have a bit of bite! Drain it well. Melt 30 g of butter in a saucepan, stir in 1 tbs of plain flour to make a roux, stir well for 2-3 minutes on a low heat to cook out the flour. Remove from the heat, gradually add 300 mls of warmed milk stirring well until smooth. Return to the heat and simmer for 3 minutes, season well and mix through cooked blended asparagus, saving a few green tips for a garnish. This also works well with smoked salmon or trout with a tsp of horseradish added to the bechamel.

Presentation and variations

We serve two or three different variations of choux as a starter and use the cheese gougères as a canapé. We find that beetroot, goat's cheese and chives and salmon, horseradish & crème fraîche work well together, in season we might use fresh asparagus in a light sauce or thinly sliced artichokes with a preserved lemon dressing or our **artichoke pate recipe**. See our website.

A salmon ceviche or just simply smoked salmon also work well. You can dress the plate with fresh or chopped pickled beetroot, thin slices of red onion, preserved lemons, capers or caperberries and fresh herbs such as chives or mint. You can drizzle the plate with a flavoured oil such as tarragon, mint or parsley – you will find quantities for these in our Canapés and garnishes recipes.

An extra option - savoury craquelin (crispy hats!)

Cream 70g butter with 90g of finely grated hard cheese, work in 90g of flour (or mix in a food processor). Roll out the dough as thinly as possible between two pieces of baking paper. Freeze until required. Cut squares or rounds of the dough to fit your choux shape and place over the choux

before baking. (For a sweet option, replace the cheese with 90g of raw sugar and use on your profiteroles or sweet éclairs!)