

Petits Choux au Fromage

[Cheese Puffs]

As cocktail appetizers, these may be served hot or cold, and need no filling. Because of the large amount of cheese, they do not rise as high as plain puffs.

For about 40 puffs, 1½ inches in diameter when baked

1 cup (4 ounces) grated Swiss, or Swiss and Parmesan, cheese

2 cups warm *pâte à choux*

Preheat oven to 425 degrees

Beat the cheese into the warm *pâte à choux*. Correct the seasoning. Squeeze into circular mounds on a baking sheet, and paint with beaten egg. After painting with egg, you may, if you wish, sprinkle each puff with a pinch of grated cheese.

Set the baking sheet in the upper third of your preheated, 425-degree oven, and bake for about 20 minutes. The puffs are done when they have doubled in size, are a golden brown, and firm and crusty to the touch. Remove them from the oven and pierce the side of each puff with a sharp knife. Then set in the turned-off oven and leave the door ajar for 10 minutes. Cool the puffs on a rack.

Pâte à Choux

[Cream Puff Paste]

Pâte à choux is one of those quick, easy, and useful preparations like béchamel sauce which every cook should know how to make. Probably the only reason for the packaged mix, which in addition to its purchase price requires fresh eggs and hot water, is that most people do not realize cream puff paste is only a very, very thick white sauce or *panade* of flour, water, seasonings, and butter, into which eggs are beaten. The eggs make the paste swell as it cooks. For half the price of a packaged mix, and in less than ten minutes, you can make your own cream puff paste with the good taste of fresh butter.

Baked just as it is in the following recipe or mixed with cheese, *pâte à choux* becomes puffs for hors d'oeuvres. Sweetened with sugar, it is ready to be cream puffs. When mashed potatoes or cooked semolina is beaten in, it turns into *gnocchi*. And with ground fish, veal, or chicken, it is quenelle paste, or can become a mousse.

For about 2 cups

A 1½-quart, heavy-bottomed saucepan

1 cup water

3 ounces (6 Tablespoons or ¾ stick) butter cut into pieces

1 teaspoon salt

1/8 teaspoon pepper
Pinch of nutmeg

Bring water to boil with the butter and seasonings and boil slowly until the butter has melted. Meanwhile measure out the flour.

3/4 cup all-purpose flour

Remove from heat and immediately pour in all the flour at once. Beat vigorously with a wooden spatula or spoon for several seconds to blend thoroughly. Then beat over moderately high heat for 1 to 2 minutes until mixture leaves the sides of the pan and the spoon, forms a mass, and begins to film the bottom of the pan.

4 eggs

Remove saucepan from heat and make a well in the center of the paste with your spoon. Immediately break an egg into the center of the well. Beat it into the paste for several seconds until it has absorbed. Continue with the rest of the eggs, beating them in one by one. The third and fourth eggs will be absorbed more slowly. Beat for a moment more to be sure all is well blended and smooth.

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