



Grains of truth about PASTRY

Definitions

Pies, turnovers, strudel and cream puffs, are just a few of the pastries loved the world over. The same basic ingredients, flour, fat and water, are used to make all of them. When combined in different proportions and by varying mixing methods, these basic ingredients make flexible dough's that can be shaped into practical or decorative shapes to hold a variety of sweet or savory fillings.

SHORT CRUST:

This basic dough is commonly used for pies, tarts and petit fours. It is a flaky, crisp pastry with several variations: the basic short crust, a sturdy but tender pastry made with a minimum of fat and water; the rich short crust, fragile, crumbly dough made with egg; and refrigerator dough, the most delicate short crust, especially when made with cake flour, butter and sugar.

PUFF-PASTRY:

This pastry consists of as many as 700 layers of paper-thin pastry separated by butter and air for a light, crisp, and rich pastry. Puff pastry dough can be shaped for turnovers, cream horns and shells to hold different types of sweet or savory fillings.

STRUDEL AND PHYLLO:

Strong, elastic dough's are rolled and stretched so thin you can read a newspaper through it, then layered with butter. Popular and versatile, they can be wrapped, folded, or shaped around various fillings, from fruit to meat. They are usually baked, as in fruit-filled strudels, but similar dough's can also be deep-fried.

CHOU PASTE (ALSO CALLED CREAM PUFF PASTE):

This is a unique cooked dough that, when baked, forms a high shell around an inner cavity. The cavity can be filled with whipped or vanilla cream, cheeses, and other sweet or savory fillings.

History

The ancient Egyptians fashioned the first crude pastries out of grain meal flavored with honey, fruits and spices. The Greeks and Romans improved on the early recipes, but it was in the Middle East where pastries were developed into something of a culinary art form. Pastries were first brought to Europe during the Muslim invasion of the 7th century and quickly captured the imagination of European chefs. Their inventive use of pastries reached its zenith during the Renaissance when pies were filled with live rabbits, frogs, and birds for special banquets, just as in the old nursery rhyme "Four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie."

Availability

All pastry types can usually be found at retail bakeries and supermarket in-store bakeries. Ready-made pastries are also available frozen or packaged on the grocery shelf. Pie crust is sold as a mix, and in frozen or packaged form, shaped and ready to fill. Puff pastry and phyllo dough are both labor-intensive to make from scratch, but can be purchased as frozen shells or sheets. Cookbooks and magazines are excellent sources for recipes for homemade pastries of all types.

Nutritional value

By adhering to a well-balanced, low-fat diet, we can occasionally indulge our taste for light, tender pastries. Along with cakes and cookies, pastries have the highest sugar and fat content of the wheat foods. How high depends on the type of pastry and what fillings are used with it. (See table on opposite side.)



Ingredients

FLOURS:

Wheat flour is essential to pastry-making because it is the only flour with the gluten that allows dough to stretch and expand in the oven. Different types of wheat flours are suited to different types of pastry. Pastry flour, which is milled from soft wheat, is best for rich short crust and refrigerator dough's. Regular short crust and chou pastry require all-purpose flour, a mixture of hard and soft wheats, with a gluten content high enough to make dough's resilient but still tender. To produce tender puff pastry, a mixture of all-purpose flour and low-gluten cake flour is recommended. Dough's for strudel and phyllo should be made from strong, high-gluten bread flour that can stand up to stretching into large thin sheets.

FAT:

Fat, in the form of butter, margarine, solid vegetable shortening, lard, or vegetable oil, plays several important roles in pastry-making. In addition to adding flavor, the fat coats and separates flour particles, helping to lubricate and tenderize the pastry. Because fat is not absorbed by the other ingredients, it acts as a spacer, contributing flakiness to the pastry. The method of incorporating the fat into the dough affects the final texture, and differs with the various pastry types. Whether the fat is creamed, cut in, rolled in, or melted, it should be evenly distributed throughout the mixture.

LIQUIDS:

Water and milk are the most commonly used liquids in pastry but orange and lemon juice, cream, egg, and other additions can contribute to the flavor and texture of the pastry. The liquid starts the development of gluten in the flour. During baking, the liquid turns to steam, helping to leaven the pastry. The amount of liquid used will affect the tenderness of the dough, as does the fat and type of flour.

Storage

Storage recommendations for pies and tarts will vary, depending on the filling used. While some will keep at room temperature or in the refrigerator (wrapped in foil) for several days, others are best served on the same day as baked. Pies are best frozen in an unbaked state to prevent crust shrinkage. Wrapped in a layer of plastic wrap and a layer of foil, they will keep for several months in the freezer. Bake before defrosting.

Baked cream puff pastry stales quickly and should be frozen if not used immediately. Cool after baking and seal in a container to prevent crushing. Limit freezing time to five days to prevent pastry from absorbing freezer odors.

Unbaked puff pastry, strudel and phyllo dough's can be refrigerated for several days, or wrapped in plastic or freezer wrap plus a layer of foil and frozen. Thaw to room temperature before baking. To freeze baked puff pastry shells, cool and wrap in aluminum foil. To use, unwrap and crisp in a 325°F oven until warm. Fill as desired.

Nutritional value (pastries listed according to ingredients used.)

ONE PIECE/ITEM	WEIGHT (ounces)	CALORIES	CARBOHYDRATES (gm)	PROTEIN (gm)	FAT (gm)
Cream Puff/Filling	4.0	256.0	23.0	7.0	15.5
Strudel/Filling	4.0	273.0	50.0	3.0	8.0
Apple Pie (1/6 pie)	5.6	404.0	60.0	3.5	17.5
Blueberry Pie (1/6 pie)	5.6	380.0	55.0	4.0	17.0
Short Crust (1/6 pie)	1.0	150.0	13.0	1.8	10.0

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