

Galette des Rois

yield: Makes 8 servings

In France, it is traditional to serve this galette on January 6, the Feast of the Epiphany, 12 days after Christmas. Be careful not to bite too hard — you might get the dried bean hidden inside (to symbolize the baby Jesus). Whoever finds the bean in their slice is crowned king or queen for the day.

Active time: 20 min Start to finish: 55 min

Recipe

- 1/4 cup pure almond paste (2 ounces)
 - 1/4 cup granulated sugar
 - 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
 - 2 large eggs
 - 1/4 teaspoon vanilla
 - 1/4 teaspoon almond extract
 - 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
 - 17 1/4-oz puff pastry sheets, see recipe below
 - 1 dried bean such as a lima bean (optional)
 - 1/2 tablespoon confectioners sugar
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Preparation

Preheat oven to 450°F.

Purée almond paste, granulated sugar, butter, and a pinch of salt in a food processor until smooth. Add 1 egg, vanilla, and almond extract and purée until incorporated. Add flour and pulse until incorporated.

Roll out 1 puff pastry sheet into an 11 1/2-inch square on a lightly floured surface with a floured rolling pin, then brush off excess flour from both sides. Cut out an 11-inch round by tracing around an inverted plate with tip of a paring knife. Transfer round to a buttered large baking sheet (not dark metal, or pastry may brown too much), discarding trimmings, and chill. Repeat procedure with second pastry sheet, leaving round on floured surface.

Beat remaining egg with a fork and brush some over top of second round. Score round decoratively all over using tip of knife, then make several small slits all the way through pastry, at about 2-inch intervals, to create steam vents.

Brush some of egg in a 1-inch-wide border around edge of chilled pastry round (on baking sheet). Mound almond cream in center of chilled round, spreading slightly, and bury bean in cream. Immediately cover with decorated round and press edges together lightly. Holding a small spoon with side at an angle, press around edge to seal galette decoratively.

Bake galette in lower third of oven until puffed and pale golden, 13 to 15 minutes. Dust galette with confectioners sugar and bake in upper third of oven until edge is deep golden brown and shiny, 12 to 15 minutes more. Transfer to a rack to cool slightly, 5 to 10 minutes. Serve warm.

Puff Pastry

Julia Child's The French Chef Cookbook

The Detrempe:

1/3 cup salad oil
3 cups granular instant blending flour
2 tsp salt dissolved in ¾ cup cold water
2 or more Tb additional cold water if needed.

In a food processor, pour the oil into the flour – mix – then add salted water until it lumps up. Knead as briefly as possible into a cake 6 inches in diameter. Wrap in waxed paper and refrigerate for 1 hour.

The Dough and Butter Package:

2 sticks (1/2 lb) chilled unsalted butter

Just before proceeding to next step, pound the butter with a rolling pin, then knead with the heel of the hand to smooth out butter and get out all lumps. Butter must be cold but malleable. Form it into a 5 inch square. Roll the dough into a 10 inch circle, place the butter in the center of the dough circle, then bring the edges of the circle up over the butter to enclose it completely. Do not stretch dough at sides of butter; press dough well together on top and seal by pressing with fingers.

First Turn:

Sprinkle board and top of dough lightly with granular flour, and roll dough rapidly and evenly into as perfect a rectangle as possible, about 6 by 16 inches. Keep lifting dough and sprinkling underside and top lightly with flour as necessary to prevent sticking. Then, as though you were folding a long sheet of letter paper, lift up the bottom (one of the small ends) of the dough and fold it over a third of the dough; lift the top and fold it down to meet the bottom edge of the first fold, making three even layers of dough.

Second Turn:

Turn dough so that top edge of top layer is to your right; roll into a rectangle as before, and fold again in thirds. Wrap in a large sheet of waxed paper, then in plastic bag or damp towel, and chill for one hour.

Third and Fourth Turns:

Make two more turns in the same manner, then wrap and chill again for one hour

Fifth and Sixth Turns:

Repeat with the two final turns, then let the dough rest for at least 2 hours or overnight before rolling and shaping. Dough will keep for several days in the refrigerator or may be frozen.

Note: Work as rapidly as possible so butter does not soften. If dough softens and is hard to handle, stop where you are, and chill. Whenever dough seems rubbery and is hard to roll or retracts after folding, stop where you are; wrap and chill dough until it has relaxed. If dough is too cold, leave at room temperature until butter has again become malleable.