



Apple Cinnamon Empanadas

Empanadas are incredibly versatile filled turnovers. They can be savory or sweet, baked or fried. These dessert empanadas are perfect as little hand-held treats, or served plated with a scoop of your favorite ice cream. The creamy filling of apples, raisins and cinnamon make them a delightful ending to a Southwestern meal.

6 servings

Ingredients

For the apple filling:

4 Rome or Gala apples
½ cup raisins
¼ cup rum or port wine
Juice and zest of 1 lemon
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1 teaspoon fresh ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon fresh ground nutmeg
¼ cup white sugar, plus more for sprinkling
¼ cup brown sugar

For the empanada dough:

1½ cups all purpose flour, plus extra for dusting
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon sugar
8 tablespoons chilled unsalted butter (one stick cut into small pieces)
2-4 tablespoons ice water, plus extra if needed
1 egg, slightly beaten
1 tablespoon water

[Chef's Note: For an even easier dessert, you can buy frozen empanada discs in many supermarkets or Latin markets. They have paper separators, and when defrosted, are ready to fill and bake.]

Preparation

Prepare the filling:

Soak the raisins in the rum or port wine, and allow to plump up while you prepare the apples.

Peel and core the apples, and cut them into ¼-inch dice. Toss them with the lemon juice to prevent them from browning. Heat a sauté pan over medium-high heat and melt the butter. When the foam begins to subside, add the apples and stir well to coat. Lower the heat to medium and cook the apples for 5 minutes until they begin to soften. Add the minced lemon zest, cornstarch, freshly ground cinnamon and nutmeg, ¼ cup of white sugar and the brown sugar. Add the plumped raisins with the liquor and stir well to combine. When the mixture has thickened, remove from the heat and allow to cool slightly.

Prepare the empanada dough:

Mix the flour, sugar and salt in the bowl of a food processor and pulse to mix well. Add the chilled butter pieces and pulse in short bursts to cut the flour and the butter together. The mixture should resemble crumbs. Do not overmix. Slowly drizzle in ice water a little at a time, and process just until the mixture comes together into a ball. If it's a little dry, add just a splash more of the ice water, being careful not to add too much. The mixture should just hold its shape. Wrap the dough in plastic and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

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Preheat the oven to 375° F. Divide the dough into 6 pieces. Sprinkle a clean countertop with a little flour and roll out each piece of dough from the center outward, rotating occasionally, until the dough is slightly less than ¼-inch thick, and about 6 inches in diameter. Use a little more flour, as necessary, if the dough becomes sticky. Dust the circles with flour, stack them, and wrap in plastic wrap while you roll out the rest. Beat the egg with 1 tablespoon of water in a bowl and set aside.

Working with one circle of dough at a time, place about 2 tablespoons of filling in the center. Using a pastry brush or your fingers, brush a little of the egg wash on the outside of the dough and fold each circle over, pressing to close. Crimp the edges to form a fluted finish, and lay on an ungreased baking sheet. Brush the tops of the empanadas with additional egg wash, then sprinkle with the remaining white sugar, and bake in the preheated oven for about 20-30 minutes, until the pastry is golden brown.

Service

Remove from the oven and serve warm. You may also serve with your favorite ice cream, or with a dusting of powdered sugar and some freshly ground cinnamon.

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November 2006