

PUFF PASTRY

The original recipe by Amelia Simmons for puff pastry upon which this recipe is based appears in *American Cookery* (Hartford, 1796). The recipe, with commentary, can be found in Keith Stavely and Kathleen Fitzgerald's *Northern Hospitality: Cooking By the Book in New England* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2011).

MAKES TWO NINE-INCH PIE CRUSTS

Simmons is vague about how to incorporate into the dough the large amount of butter used in making puff pastry, saying only to “rub in one third or half” and “roll in the rest.” The more detailed instructions provided by one of Simmons’s successors, Catharine Beecher, work well. The steps outlined here are based on them.

2²/₃ cups all-purpose flour

21-22 tablespoons butter (2²/₃ sticks)

1 medium egg

1 teaspoon water

Put 1½ cups of the flour in a food processor. Add 8 tablespoons (1 stick) of the butter, and pulse until the butter is in pea-sized pieces.

Whisk the egg and stir the water into it.

With the processor at low speed, slowly add the egg and water mixture to the flour and butter mixture, just until it comes together in a ball.

Remove the dough, cover with plastic wrap, and chill it in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.

Remove the dough from the refrigerator. Lightly dredge a pastry board with some of the remaining flour and roll out the dough into a rectangle approximately 12 inches by 18 inches and about ¼-inch thick. The length and width don't have to be exact, but aim for a rectangular shape. Set the rolled dough aside.

Cut the remaining 1²/₃ sticks of cold butter into roughly ½ -inch pieces. Dredge the board well with more of the remaining flour. Place pieces of butter on the board, enough to form a rectangle slightly smaller than the dough (about 10 inches by 16 inches). Spread a bit of flour on the rolling pin, and lightly dredge the top of the butter rectangle with flour. Roll it into a thin sheet, trying to retain the shape of a rectangle as much as possible. Sprinkle on a bit more flour if the butter sheet sticks to the rolling pin. If the butter is too soft to roll out, chill it for 5 or 10 minutes and try again.

Place the sheet of butter on top of the rolled dough, fold in thirds like a letter, turn 90° and roll out, again forming a rectangle.

Repeat the above steps with the remaining ½ -inch pieces of butter—forming them into rectangles, rolling the rectangles into thin sheets, and incorporating the sheets one after another into the dough, by placing them on top of the dough, folding the dough in thirds, turning 90°, and rolling. Work as quickly as possible, keeping the butter cold. If

any of the components get warm, place them in the refrigerator for a few minutes to re-chill before proceeding.

After the last sheet of butter is rolled in, fold the dough again into thirds, cover it with a second sheet of plastic wrap, and place it in the refrigerator to rest for another 30 minutes or so. The dough can now be used, or frozen for later use.