

Make It Sweet.

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Pasticciotti

Pictures and a recipe for this classic regional Italian pastry from Puglia have been going around Facebook for awhile. I was intrigued and finally had a chance to make and tweak the recipe and technique. This delicious pastry is made from a very soft crust that surrounds a flavorful homemade pastry cream and is then assembled and baked together. The pastry stays nice and soft and the pastry cream becomes even a little thicker after being baked making a delicious hand-pie. I topped some of them with crystal sugar to make a crunchy top and others with just a powdered sugar dusting. I really like the texture of the sugar on top – but then again I am the one who likes best the crunchy tops of cakes too. There is an individual oval shaped metal pan that makes the traditional shape – but I made mine right in a standard cupcake pan – and they turned out just fine. Give these pastries a try. This pastry cream is delicious – but you could just as well use a chocolate pastry cream or any other flavor. By the way – it is reported that George Clooney ordered 2000 of these pastries to be served at his wedding. That made me want to try it even more! They are delicious warm from the oven – but I like them best at room temperature. Enjoy!

Dough

- 2 cups (250 g) all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup (100 g) sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 Tbsp vanilla bean paste or vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 cup (55 g) butter
- 1/4 cup (55 g) High Ratio Shortening or Vegetable Shortening (Crisco)
- 1/4 cup whole milk

In a food processor bowl combine flour, sugar, salt and baking powder and pulse.

Add butter and shortening and pulse until the consistency of cornmeal.

Add egg, milk and vanilla and mix until dough forms a ball around the blade.

Scrape out onto floured countertop and knead – adding a little more flour if necessary until smooth.

Divide dough in half. Roll out each half between pieces of parchment to 1/4" using Perfection Strips or dowel rods to be sure of even thickness.

Place onto sheet pan and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to overnight.

Make the filling while the dough is resting in the refrigerator.



Filling

3 tablespoons cornstarch
1/2 (100 g) cup sugar
3/4 cup heavy cream
3/4 cup milk
2 egg yolks, lightly beaten
1 tablespoon butter
1 Tbsp vanilla bean paste or vanilla extract



In a small saucepan whisk cornstarch and sugar to combine.

Add the cream, milk and egg yolks and whisk until smooth.

Place pan over medium heat and stir constantly until thickened to the consistency of a thick pudding and thickly coats the back of a spoon.

Remove from the heat, add the butter and vanilla and whisk until melted and combined.

You can strain the pastry cream if it appears lumpy and/or pour into a bowl and cover with plastic wrap so that it is touching directly on the surface of the pastry cream.

Refrigerate at least one hour and up to several days.

Assembly

1 egg, beaten, for egg wash
Crystal Sugar (optional)

Preheat oven to 425°F.

Take one of the sheets of dough from the refrigerator.

Peel off the top sheet of parchment. Turn that sheet over and place on top. Holding two corners from the same side of both parchment sheets, flip the whole thing over.

Carefully peel off the now top sheet.

Using a 3" round cutter, cut out 12 circles. Re-roll any scraps as before and place back in the refrigerator.

Put the rounds in the bottom of each muffin cavity (no need to spray or grease the pan) and using a tart tamper or your fingers, bring the dough all the way up the sides being sure not to have any holes or air pockets at the bottom or on the sides.

Place the pastry cream into a pastry bag and pipe about 2 Tbsp of filling into each dough. The pastry cream will not come to the top of the tin.

Take the extra dough at the top and bring it over the edges of the filling. The dough will not cover the filling all of the way – just over the edge towards the center.

Cut 12 3" circles from the remaining dough re-rolling scraps as necessary. Place a circle over each pastry and gently press on the edges to attach.

Brush the tops with the beaten egg and sprinkle with sugar crystals if desired.

Bake for 15 to 18 minutes until lightly golden brown.

Allow to cool for about 10 minutes in the pan. Run a spatula or sharp paring knife around each pastry and remove.

Serve immediately or allow to come to room temperature and serve that way. Store any leftovers in the refrigerator for up to 3 days but bring to room temp for best eating.

