

PAULAQ'S COCONUT CREAM PUFFS

I was inspired to make a coconut cream puff because I so loved Crown Bakery's cream puff, the ones with the pastry cream or vanilla pudding-like filling. There are three parts to this dessert: coconut pastry cream, milk chocolate ganache and the dough or pate a choux (pronounced "patashoe"). I would recommend making the pastry cream on day 1, the ganache on day two, and the pate a choux on day 3.

This dessert is my very own, just like coconut latiya. Growing up on Guam, I never had, heard of or seen coconut latiya until I published my recipe a few years ago. Enjoy the indulgence, my little paradise-in-a-puff!

The recipe below may seem like a very long process, but I used detailed explanations. BE SURE TO WATCH THE VIDEO FIRST.

I have to do one more run-through of this recipe when I produce the video. I apologize ahead of time for spelling, grammar and errors of unintentional omission.

COCONUT PASTRY CREAM

This recipe is adapted from my favorite pastry chef's book, Dessert Circus, by Jacques Torres. I bought his book at the Mannheim PX in Mannheim, Germany back in 1998. I also bought my favorite kitchen scale directly from his shop, shipped to Germany. Because of him, I sent my \$100 fee and my application to the French Culinary Institute in New York. I drifted back down to reality, accepting that graduating with a B.S. student loan tab would not mix well with another 25K for six months of pastry chef training.

On the upside, I've enjoyed all the work I have been doing on Guam desserts plus the multitude of bakery visits over the last 14 years throughout Europe and the U.S.

All of your ingredients should be at room temperature. Heat the milk so it is barely warm if it is directly out of your fridge.

INGREDIENTS

Set 1

1 ¼ c. granulated sugar
1/3 c. + 1 tbsp. whole grain pastry flour
1/3 c. cornstarch

Set 2

4 large eggs
4 large egg yolks

Set 3

4 c. whole milk
1 tbs. vanilla extract

Set 4

1 stick unsalted butter, cubed
2 c. freshly grated coconut (I grated mine and froze them in 1-cup portions. Then, I thawed out and used in the pastry cream.)

Tools: small bowl, large bowl, whisk, ¼ cup measuring cup, large pot, rubber spatula, cake decorating piping bag measuring 12 or 16 inches, cake decorating coupler and number 12 round tip

DIRECTIONS

1. In a small bowl, combine the sugar, pastry flour and the cornstarch. Mix thoroughly to break up any lumps.
2. In a large bowl, whisk the egg yolks and the eggs together.
3. Pour the dry ingredients into the eggs and blend well to form a very smooth mixture. Set aside then place a trivet on the counter.
4. Pour the milk and vanilla into a large pot on medium heat until it comes to a gentle boil.
5. Take the pot off the stove, leaving the heat turned on. Place the pot on the trivet.
6. Pour ¼ cup of the milk slowly into the bowl of the egg mixture as you use your whisk to quickly beat the new mixture.
7. Continue to slowly add the hot milk into the egg mixture, gently bringing the temperature of the eggs closer to the temperature of the milk; this process is called tempering which prevents the hot milk from cooking, or scrambling, the eggs. You end up with smooth cream.
8. Once you have added about three-fourths of your milk, pour the egg and milk mixture quickly back into the pot of leftover milk and whisk thoroughly.
9. Put the pot back on the burner.
10. Whisk quickly around the entire pot until the pastry cream comes to a gentle boil.
11. Gently boil the pastry cream for two minutes, “cooking out” the cornstarch; boiling removes the starchy taste.
12. Take the pot off of the heat then add all of the butter.
13. When most of the butter has melted, stir in the coconut with a rubber spatula.
14. Pour into a container then place a sheet of plastic wrap directly over the coconut pastry cream. Set aside to cool.
15. Once the pastry cream is barely warm, cover with the lid then place in fridge overnight.

Note: Whole grain pastry flour is generally available at your natural food stores. If not, you may have to order it from King Arthur flour on-line. It’s delish in this recipe. If you have regular pastry flour, it will work just fine. Use whole grain pastry flour only for coconut pastry cream not regular pastry cream; you will feel the grit and it is not pleasant. Store the pastry flour in a freezer bag in your freezer if you do not use it regularly.

MILK CHOCOLATE GANACHE

A mixture of heavy cream and chocolate, ganache is simply divine. This recipe was adapted from another favorite pastry chef’s book, *Death by Chocolate*, by Marcel Desaulniers. He was a former owner of The Trellis Restaurant in Williamsburg, Virginia. Fortunately for me, I did get him to sign one of his dessert books I happened to own.

Making ganache can be a tricky process if you do not make it often. A small drop of water, unmelted chocolate and overbeating the mixture will lead to disaster. Keep a tub of your favorite, store-bought chocolate frosting on stand-by just in-case the ganache does not turn out. I used to make my cream puffs with the frosting from the store and it was delish too.

Prepare the ganache a day or two ahead of when you will actually bake the pate a choux and assemble the cream puffs. In this manner, you have time to react to any problems in making your ganache.

INGREDIENTS

Set 1

12 oz. Dove milk chocolate, finely chopped (found in the bagged candy aisle)

Set 2

1 c. heavy cream

Set 3

½ tsp. instant espresso powder

Tools: *microwave-safe measuring pitcher, large bowl, cutting board and knife, rubber spatula, hand-held electric beater, cake decorating piping bag measuring 12 or 16 inches, cake decorating coupler and number 18 star tip*

DIRECTIONS

1. Place the cream in a microwave-safe measuring pitcher.
2. Heat at 30-second intervals until it comes to a boil.
3. Use a spoon to remove the film on the surface of the cream; discard.
4. Add the espresso powder to the cream then stir to dissolve.
5. Pour the cream over the chopped chocolate.
6. Wait for 60 seconds.
7. Use a rubber spatula to thoroughly incorporate the mixture.
8. Run the spatula from the sides of the bowl to the bottom, coming up the middle and turning the spatula over; this is called folding.
9. Do this one complete turn of the bowl.
10. Gently move the spatula in a circular motion at the center of the bowl, further incorporating the ingredients.
11. Alternate between folding and gently stirring until the ganache is a single, cohesive mixture.
12. Set aside on the counter to completely cool, about six hours. In the meantime, start on the pate choux if you have not already made it.
13. Ensure water or any other liquid will not drip or splash into your cooling ganache.
14. The ganache is ready when it very slowly slides around the bowl.
15. At this point, use your electric beater to whip the ganache ON LOW, forming a frosting you can pipe from a piping bag. Do not be tempted to beat on medium or high because you will ruin the ganache, turning it into a crumbly mixture. Pull your beaters out checking for soft peaks, when the tips of the frosting fall over. Beat till stiff peaks form, when the tips maintain their peaks pretty well. The transition between soft peaks and stiff peaks happens quickly.
16. Cover the frosting directly with plastic wrap. Set aside until after you make the dough.

PATE A CHOUX or CREAM PUFF DOUGH

This is another recipe adapted from Jacques Torres in his aforementioned book. He uses this to make a tower of miniature cream puffs called a croquembouche. There are many recipes available for cream puff dough; I happen to prefer his as he uses bread flour. I also like the texture of dough made using all-purpose flour. Hence, I am using a half-and-half blend. I also increased the sugar to enhance the color and the taste.

It may seem like plenty of work to make pate a choux, but it is much easier than making Chamorro sweet bread. Have all of your ingredients measured and your equipment ready to use to ease the process.

INGREDIENTS

Set 1

6 large eggs

Set 2

1¼ c. water

1 tbsp. granulated sugar

1 tsp. salt

1 stick + 1 tbsp. unsalted butter

Set 3

½ c. + 2 tbsp. all-purpose flour

½ c. + 2 tbsp. bread flour (sometimes called “better-for-bread”)

Tools: *small measuring pitcher, fork, small bowls, trivet, wood spatula with square end, medium pot, table-top stand mixer with paddle attachment, tablespoon measuring spoon, parchment paper, pencil, cookie sheet, 2 3/8 or 2.5-inch diameter circle object, cake decorating piping bag measuring 12 or 16 inches, strainer for the powdered sugar*

DIRECTIONS

Preheat your oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. The oven must be heated at this temperature for at least 20 minutes before baking your choux.

Prepping your ingredients and equipment:

1. Put four eggs into a measuring pitcher. Set aside.
2. Place the other two eggs in a small bowl and beat well with a fork. Set aside.
3. Mix the bread flour and the all-purpose flour together. Set aside.
4. Place a trivet on the counter and have your stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment ready to go.

Combining the water mixture and the flours:

5. Pour all of set 2 into a large pot.
6. Bring the mixture to a boil on medium heat, melting the butter. Stir to thoroughly combine.
7. Take the pot off of the stove and place it on the trivet; leave the burner turned on.
8. Add the flours then use the wood spatula to completely mix the ingredients; you should have a mass of dough.
9. Put the pot back on the burner, reducing the heat between medium-low and medium. Continue to “stir” the dough all over the pot, about 4 minutes; you are basically moving the dough by folding it onto itself in the pot, pushing it and scooping it, trying to “stir” it. This dries your pate a choux so it can absorb plenty of eggs. The more eggs in your dough, the richer it will be.
10. Do not stop mixing or your dough will burn.
11. Cook the dough until you can see a more noticeable film on the bottom of the pot, slightly thicker compared to when you first started drying the dough. Again, this will take a total of about 4 minutes.

Adding the eggs to the dough:

12. Transfer the choux into the bowl of your stand mixer.
13. Mix for 4 minutes on low speed to release some of the heat so you do not scramble or cook your eggs.
14. Add 1 egg to the bowl of dough.
15. Ensure the egg is incorporated very well before adding each of the three remaining eggs; the dough will look separated and weird. Beat for about 30 seconds after each addition.

16. Add 2 tbsp. of the beaten eggs; you will not get a full tablespoon of beaten eggs in your measuring spoon, but use what will stay in the spoon. Incorporate well. Turn the mixer off.
17. Use an adult dinner spoon to scoop a spoonful of dough. Hold the spoon about 12 inches above the mixing bowl.
18. Turn the spoon over and watch how the dough falls back into the bowl.
19. Good pate a choux takes about 5 to 7 seconds to fall back into the bowl; it will break off from your spoon, leaving a small tail on the spoon. It should look smooth and feel sticky. If your eggs are exactly like mine and the humidity is exact as well, the dough will not drop from the spoon so you will need to add some of the remaining beaten eggs.
20. Add 2 tbsp. of the beaten eggs; you will not get a full tablespoon of beaten eggs in your measuring spoon, but just use what will stay in the spoon. Incorporate well then check the consistency again as described above.
21. Continue to add the eggs 2 tablespoons at a time then check the consistency after each addition. When the ribbons of dough fall from the paddle nicely and when the dough falls from the spoon back into the bowl, it should not blend into the dough that is sitting in the bowl. Instead, the ribbons and spoon of dough should stay on the surface.
22. Sometimes I end up needing only about 5 eggs while at other time I end up using about 6 eggs. Yet again, there are time I use nearly 7 eggs. Remember, even if you use 6 large eggs today, the actual volume will vary the next time you use another 6 eggs. Additionally, unless you are weighing your flour with an accurate digital scale, your volume of flour will slightly vary from one choux dough to the next.

Wrapping the dough to pipe it:

1. It's simply better to refer you to my YouTube video for instructions: [cake decorating techniques to fill a piping bag or cake decorating bag.](#)
2. Or, if you prefer written instructions, [here is an article I wrote with step-by-step directions for filling a piping bag with icing.](#) It's the same process for wrapping pate a choux.
3. Just cut a small piece at the end of the piping bag, measuring about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch in diameter. This will be your tip; cut the bag before inserting your wrapped dough.

Piping the dough onto parchment:

1. Use a small plastic container or something round measuring about 2.5 inches or slightly less in diameter.
2. Unroll a sheet of parchment paper to the size of your cookie sheet.
3. Trace circles onto the curling side of your parchment, just for ease of piping; both sides are non-stick.
4. Space the circles about 2 inches apart as the pate a choux will enlarge quite a bit. I can fit six on a half-sheet pan. You can probably do 8 or 10 on a very large cookie sheet that takes up the entire rack in your oven.
5. Turn the parchment over.
6. Hold your piping bag completely vertical and at the center of one circle.
7. Squeeze the bag to extract the dough, moving the bag in a gentle, slow circular motion to fill up the inside of the circle. The dough should be a $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick. **DO NOT TRACE THE CIRCLE WITH THE PIPING BAG.** You must pipe from the center of the circle and allow the dough to fill out around the tip.
8. Repeat for remaining circles.

Baking the pate a choux:

1. Bake the dough for 15 to 20 minutes at 400 degrees. If you are baking a full tray, go for 20 minutes. If you are on your last bit of dough and are baking only two choux, bake for 15 minutes. This enables the dough to puff up and set. The choux will take on a good bit of color.

2. Reduce the heat to 350 degrees and bake for 15 to 20 minutes. Again, 20 minutes for full trays, 15 minutes for the stragglers.
3. Look at the puffs. The crevices where the dough separates should be as brown as the rest of the dough. If the cracks and crevices are lighter in color, the puffs are not done.
4. When the cracks are the same color, open the oven door about 4 inches and continue to bake at 350 degrees for 4 to 5 more minutes; this lets the steam out, further drying your puffs.
5. Prepare another tray of puffs during these last few minutes of baking. Set aside.
6. Remove the pan from the oven, close the oven door and increase the temperature back to 400 degrees.
7. Take the puffs off the cookie sheet and let them cool completely on a cooling rack.
8. After about 4 minutes of the oven gearing back up to 400 degrees, place the next tray in.
9. Repeat until you have baked all of the choux.

Putting it together:

1. When your puffs are completely cooled, cut a small section off the very top of each puff and SAVE. Use your fingers to reach into the shell, removing the eggy dough. Discard.
2. Wrap your coconut pastry cream as if to fill a piping bag; you may have to stir the cream in the bowl to soften it.
3. Fit a cake decorating bag with a round tip, a number 12.
4. Fill the bag with the wrapped cream as described above. Fill each puff up to the opening then top with the section of removed choux.
5. Wrap your beaten ganache in the same manner. Fit a cake decorating bag with a number 18 star tip.
6. Decorate the top with a general design of chocolate.
7. Dust with powdered sugar if desired.
8. Enjoy this indulgence!!

Note: Though the choux pastry is best eaten the same day you bake them, it is still good for the next two days. Do not fill the puffs with cream, simply store them in a covered container at room temperature; the dough will soften which is fine. When ready, preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Place the choux on a cookie sheet with at least an inch between each piece. Bake for about 7 minutes to make the puffs firm again. Cool completely then fill as described above.

The coconut pastry cream and milk chocolate ganache can be made and wrapped a few days ahead of time, but store them in the fridge.

This recipe makes 18 complete coconut cream puffs. You will have just under 1 cup of leftover pastry cream and about as much of the chocolate ganache. Hey, you get to enjoy a bit of coconut pudding (pastry cream) topped with chocolate.

Recipe courtesy Paula Quinene of Paulaq.com.