

MINCEMEAT PIES

(adapted from *Irish Times* and *Nancy Birtwhistle*)

Makes 10 to 12 little pies, depending on how thin you are able to roll the pastry.

Prepare your muffin pan: place a thin strip of parchment paper inside each hole, to facilitate removal of the pies after baking).

for the mincemeat filling:

200g raisins

50g dried apricots, finely diced

50g dried cherries, finely diced

120g brown sugar

120g unsalted butter

70ml sherry

Finely grated zest of 1 large orange

1 tsp cinnamon

1/8 tsp nutmeg

pinch of ground cloves

Combine the fruit with the sugar, butter, sherry, orange zest, and spices in a saucepan and put on a gentle heat for a few minutes until the butter melts and the fruit softens slightly in the buttery syrup. Bring to a gentle simmer and simmer until it gets thick, with not much liquid floating in the surface. Cool and use to fill the little pies.

for the pastry:

310g all purpose flour

30g powdered sugar

pinch of salt

170g butter (chilled and cut in small cubes)

3 egg yolks mixed with very cold water to make a volume of 6 tablespoons

Heat the oven to 375F.

Put the flour, sugar and salt in food processor then add the butter and process until the butter is in small pieces. With the motor running add the mixture of egg yolks and cold water. Stop the mixer before the pastry forms a ball, remove it from the processor and gently bring it all together with your hands over plastic wrap. Shape into a flat disc and leave it in the fridge for 30 minutes.

Roll out the pastry to a thickness of about 3mm. I like to do it in between two plastic sheets (I cut the four sides of a large ziplock bag leaving just the bottom

part attached, open it and roll the pastry inside it). Cut out circles with a 9 cm (about 3.5 inches) round cookie cutter. Place them carefully inside the prepared muffin cups. Cut out 7 cm (a little less than 3 inches) lids which should fit right over the top. Use a small star shaped or round cookie cutter to make a hole in the middle of the pastry lids.

Fill each base with the mincemeat, brush a little water on the edges of the pastry and gently lay the top over. No need to apply pressure, and no need to brush the top with egg wash. Bake for about 25 minutes until the mince pies are light golden. Allow to cool slightly before removing them from the muffin cups. Dust the mince pies with icing sugar.