

Wild Mince Pies

I love seasonal mince pies with their heavy spice and fruit, this version is definitely a different beast by taking advantage of the wild flavours of winter and using up some Autumn fruits from the freezer.

Makes 12

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Method: Filling

While the pastry chills make the filling. Simmer around 300g of elderberries with a little water to stop the pan burning dry. I also added some dried sweet woodruff but you can add some vanilla in its place if you like. Strain to remove the skins and seeds and reserve the liquid. Add the juice plus all the other fruit to a pan and place over a medium heat. Cook until the apple and blackberries are completely broken down and the mix has slightly thickened and reduced. This should take about 15 - 20 minutes. Add in the chestnuts, hazels and spices and cook for a further 10 minutes.

The mix should be thick and jammy. Add in the sugar, butter and salt. Taste for sweetness as your fruit may be different from mine. Feel free to add some additional sugar if you feel like it needs it! Allow this to cool completely.

Preheat the oven to 200 C. Lightly grease a 3x4 bun tin with some butter. Cut your dough rectangle into two. Roll out one half to about the thickness of a £1 coin. Cut 12 discs out approximately 10 cm each. Roll out the second half of the dough and cut 12 same size or smaller discs for the tops. You can score a design on these or make a hole for steam. Press each larger disc gently into the spaces in the tray. Fill with about a teaspoon of the cooled filling. Top with the second set of pastry. I find these work best if I pop the whole tray into the freezer for a few minutes to ensure the butter in the pastry stays cold.

Egg wash the tops of the pies and pop into the oven for 20-25 minutes or until very golden brown. Allow to cool slightly in the tin before removing and then move to a cooling rack. Sprinkle with icing sugar and serve with a hot cider.

Ingredients

For the pastry

150g plain flour
Pinch of salt
110g cold butter cubed
50g ice cold water

For the filling

About 200ml elderberry juice
200g bramley apple grated
200g blackberries
100g dates chopped
5-6 ripe medlars

100g cooked chestnuts chopped
50g hazelnuts chopped
1 tsp ground ginger
½ ground clove
1 tsp ground fennel
1 tsp cinnamon

50g butter
50g brown sugar
Pinch of salt
Egg wash - optional
Icing Sugar

Method: Pastry

Mix the flour and salt together. Add the cubed butter and toss around ensuring all cubes are well dusted with flour. Take each piece of butter and pull apart to about 1 cm and proceed to squish each piece of butter flat between your fingers.

Toss each piece around in more of the flour as you go. You can make these pieces of butter smaller if you wish but keeping them larger will ensure a super crisp result.

Next, sprinkle over half of the water and mix gently with your hands to make a shaggy mix. Add the remaining water 1 tablespoon at a time until a dough forms. You may not need all of it.

Turn out to a floured surface and form into a rectangle. Wrap and chill for at least an hour and up to overnight.

