



## Croquembouche

Featured on December 7, 2019 for “Conquering Croquembouche with Julia Child” demo with Chef Lynne Just

### Pâte à Choux

Yield: about 40 to 50 puffs

### Ingredients

½ cup whole milk  
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into pieces  
1 tablespoon granulated sugar  
½ teaspoon kosher salt  
1 cup all-purpose flour  
5 large eggs, room temperature  
1 egg for egg wash

### Directions

Preheat oven to 425°. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.

Heat milk, butter, granulated sugar, salt, and ½ cup water in a medium saucepan over medium, stirring occasionally to melt butter. As soon as butter is melted, add flour all at once and stir with a wooden spoon, carefully at first to incorporate, then vigorously, until dough forms a single mass. Continue stirring, slapping dough against sides of saucepan with spoon, until dough leaves a thick film on bottom of pan and pulls away from sides, about 2- 3 minutes (the important thing here is to cook the flour and dry out the dough). Transfer to the bowl of a stand mixer.

Using the paddle attachment, mix the dough on medium speed until you no longer see steam rising from the bowl; this may take a few minutes. Add 4 eggs, one at a time, and mix thoroughly after each to completely incorporate before adding the next. After the fourth egg, stop the mixer to check the dough using the string test. Take a small glob of dough between your thumb and pointer finger. Stretch the dough gently about 2 inches apart. If the dough is ready the string will not break between your fingers. If it does break, add the fifth egg, mixing thoroughly. The final texture should be smooth, glossy.

Fit pastry bag with round tip. Spoon dough into bag. Holding bag at an angle so the tip is just touching prepared baking sheet on one side, gently start to squeeze out dough. Without moving the tip (this will help you make a perfect circle), pipe dough until you have a 1½" round (you can trace circles on the back of the parchment for extra accuracy). Repeat, staggering rounds and spacing 2" apart.

Beat remaining egg in a small bowl until no streaks remain and lightly brush tops of dough. Bake 15 minutes, then lower heat to 350°. Continue to bake until puffs are deep golden brown all over and sound hollow when tapped on the bottom, 10–15 minutes.

### **Pastry Cream**

Yield: enough to fill around 40-50 puffs

#### **Ingredients**

2 cups whole milk  
½ teaspoon kosher salt  
5 large egg yolks  
½ cup granulated sugar  
¼ cup cornstarch  
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into pieces  
2 teaspoons vanilla bean paste

#### **Directions**

Place milk and salt in a medium saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat.

Meanwhile, whisk egg yolks and granulated sugar in a medium bowl until very pale and light, about 3 minutes. Add cornstarch, whisking until no powdery dry spots remain. Whisking constantly, gradually add hot milk mixture to egg mixture. Transfer back to saucepan and cook over medium heat, whisking constantly, until mixture is thick and holds whisk marks, about 2 minutes. Remove the pan from heat and whisk in the butter and vanilla bean paste.

Strain custard through a fine-mesh sieve into a medium bowl. Chill over an ice bath until custard is around room temperature. Cover with plastic, pressing directly onto surface; chill until cold, at least 2 hours.

Fit pastry bag with a small plain or star tip. Transfer chilled pastry cream to bag. Working one at a time, poke a hole into the bottom of each puff with a paring knife. Gently pipe in pastry cream to fill. Puffs will begin to get soggy as soon as they are filled, so wait until just before serving to add pastry cream.

### **Caramel and Assembly**

#### **Ingredients**

2 ½ cups granulated sugar  
2 tablespoons light corn syrup  
½ cup water

#### **Directions**

Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper and trace an 8" circle on parchment; turn it over (the circle will still be visible; this is just a guide).

Fill a large bowl with ice water.

Bring sugar, corn syrup, and ½ cup water to a boil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring to dissolve sugar. Boil, brushing down sides with a damp pastry brush and swirling pan occasionally (do not stir), until caramel turns a light amber color. Set bottom of saucepan in ice water to stop the cooking and firm caramel slightly (if caramel is too thin, it will be runny and drip too much).

Carefully dip tops of filled puffs in caramel and place, caramel side up, on an unlined rimmed baking sheet; let sit until caramel is set. (If caramel becomes too hard before all puffs are dipped, reheat over medium-low to loosen.)

Use the 12 largest puffs for the bottom layer of your croquembouche. Working quickly, dip the side of 1 puff into caramel (you want just enough caramel to allow you to “glue” puffs together) and stick hot caramel side down onto parchment just inside the 8" circle; the top of the puff should be facing out. Dip another puff in caramel on the side in two places (at 9 o'clock and 6 o'clock) and position on parchment so that 1 spot of hot caramel will adhere to the side of the first puff and the other spot is on the parchment (again, top of puff should be facing out). Using the circle as your guide, repeat with remaining 10 puffs to complete your bottom layer.

Set out 11 puffs to make the second layer (you may not need all of them) and use caramel to stick them together the same way as the first layer, doing your best to anchor puffs in the spaces in between the bottom puffs (this will make the croquembouche more sturdy).

Continue to build croquembouche, making slightly smaller circles for each layer and reheating caramel as needed. Finish tower with a single puff; you should have about 8 layers total.

Once croquembouche is assembled, let caramel in pan cool until it just begins to form a thread when you lift it from the pot with a fork. (The cooler it gets, the faster it will harden until it hardens mid-air.) Dip fork in caramel and quickly circle over and around croquembouche, letting caramel fall where it may (puffs should be encased in airy strings of caramel when you are done). Let caramel cool to harden.

Croquembouche can be assembled 8 hours ahead. Chill until ready to serve.



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