

MINCE PIES

I like my pastry to be thin and crisp, and I nearly always make short crust pastry as I find puff pastry too rich for these pies, especially if you want to top with a mixture of cream cheese and sugar as I've suggested in this recipe.

Makes 20-24.

Ingredients:

300g (10½ ozs) plain flour
175g (6 ozs) butter
75g (3 ozs) caster sugar
Grated rind of half an orange
1 egg yolk and 3 tablespoons milk
1 tablespoon ground rice or ground almonds

For the filling:

400g (14oz) jar of mincemeat
(preferably home made)
2 tablespoons brandy
Icing sugar to dust



Method:

In a large mixing bowl mix the flour and ground rice, or almonds, add the butter in small pieces, and rub into mixture until it resembles fine breadcrumbs. Stir in the sugar, orange rind, egg and milk and mix to a dough. On a lightly floured surface knead to a smooth dough, then cover and chill for at least 30 minutes. Roll out very thinly and cut out 24 tops and bottoms with a 5cm (2 inch) pastry cutter, or a 6cm (2½ inch) for less pies, to line tart tins. Stir brandy into mincemeat and spoon 1 medium teaspoon into each tart, but do not overfill tart. Dampen the edges with water and seal the tops, and make a slit in each one. Bake in preheated oven 200C, 400F, Gas Mark 6 for 15-20 minutes until golden brown and dust with icing sugar. For a luxurious touch you can mix together about 175g (6 ozs) cream cheese and 60g (2½ ozs) caster sugar and put a teaspoon of this mixture on top of the mincemeat, then seal with the pastry lid. Delicious!