

Baked Brie in Rough Puff

with honey cranberries and garden chili hot honey

Serves 8 as an appetizer · Make the dough the day before · Bake 25 to 30 minutes at 400°F

Make the pastry and the cranberries the day before, and the day of is just rolling, wrapping and baking. The cranberries cook while the dough chills, so nothing waits on anything else.

ROUGH PUFF

250 g all-purpose flour (2 cups)
4 g fine sea salt (3/4 tsp)
225 g very cold unsalted butter, cut in 1.5 cm cubes (1 cup)
110 to 130 g ice water (about 1/2 cup)

Makes about 600 g. The brie uses about half. Freeze the rest.

Optional: 1 Tbsp fresh rosemary, finely chopped, scattered over the dough before the last two folds.

HONEY CRANBERRIES

150 g cranberries, fresh or frozen (1 1/2 cups)
60 g honey (3 Tbsp)
1/2 orange, zest and 2 Tbsp juice
1 small sprig rosemary
1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
pinch of salt

ASSEMBLY

8 oz wheel of brie (225 g), cold, rind on
30 g toasted pecans, chopped (1/4 cup), optional but recommended
1 egg beaten with 1 Tbsp cream, for the wash

GARDEN CHILI HOT HONEY

80 g honey (1/4 cup)
1/2 to 2 fresh chilis, to taste (see the heat guide)
1 garlic clove, crushed, optional
pinch of salt

TO FINISH AND SERVE

fresh cranberries and a few whole chilis to garnish
apple slices, crackers or baguette slices

HOT HONEY HEAT GUIDE

Choose your heat by who is eating it. Start low and go up from there.

Mild: half a chili, cut open with the seeds and pith removed.

More heat: use both halves. More still, add a third half. Hottest, leave the pith in.

Most control: cut a slit in a whole chili and drop it in, then pull it out when the heat is right.

Garlic version: crush a clove and let it steep with the chilis. The garlic and chilis both come out after steeping.

TIP FROM MY KITCHEN

Leave the butter in visible streaks and chunks when you mix the dough. Those streaks turn into steam in the oven and puff into your layers. If the butter disappears into the flour, you get tender pastry but no flakes.

Chill the roughly gathered dough for 20 minutes before you roll it at all. It keeps the butter cold from the very first fold.

Using a food processor? Pulse the butter into the flour 2 or 3 times only, then turn it into a bowl and add the water by hand.

HOMESTEAD WIFE LIFE

BAKED BRIE IN ROUGH PUFF

THE DAY BEFORE

1. **Mix the dough.** Whisk the flour and salt, toss in the butter cubes, then drizzle in the ice water and toss until the dough just holds together. You should still see chunks of butter. Gather it roughly, wrap it and chill 20 minutes before rolling.
2. **Fold it.** Roll into a long rectangle, fold it in thirds like a letter, turn it a quarter turn, then roll and fold again. Wrap and chill 20 minutes.
3. **Cook the cranberries while it chills.** Simmer the cranberries, honey, orange zest and juice, rosemary sprig and salt for 8 to 10 minutes, until the berries burst and it turns jammy. Off the heat, stir in the balsamic and remove the rosemary. Cool completely, cover and refrigerate.
4. **Finish the folds.** While the cranberries cool, roll and fold the dough two more times, four letter folds in all. If you are adding rosemary, scatter it over the dough before these folds. Wrap and refrigerate overnight. The overnight rest relaxes the dough so it rolls out without shrinking back. Need it today? Chill it at least 2 hours.

THE DAY OF

1. **Wrap the brie.** Roll half the dough about 3 mm thick. Set the brie in the center, spoon the cold cranberries on top and add the pecans if using. Fold the pastry up in pleats over the top.
2. **Make the leaves.** Cut leaves from the scraps with a plunge leaf cutter, or freehand with a paring knife. Flip the knife over and press the back of the blade into each leaf to mark the veins. Press them onto the pastry.
3. **Egg wash and chill.** Brush everything with the egg wash and chill for 15 minutes while the oven heats to 400°F.
4. **Bake** on a parchment-lined sheet for 25 to 30 minutes, until deep golden.
5. **Make the hot honey.** While it bakes, warm the honey, chilis, salt and garlic if using over low heat for about 5 minutes without letting it boil. Steep 10 minutes and taste. Take the chilis and garlic out when the heat is right.
6. **Rest, then cut.** Let it rest 10 to 15 minutes, or the molten brie floods out. Drizzle with hot honey, add fresh cranberries and a few whole chilis, then cut at the table.

GOOD TO KNOW

- **Keep the filling cold.** Warm cranberries melt the butter in the pastry before it reaches the oven.
- **Watch the pot.** Cranberries can spit hot juice as they burst, so keep your face and hands back while they simmer.
- **Garden chilis vary a lot in heat.** Taste the honey as it steeps and pull the chilis early if it is getting too hot. Wash your hands after cutting them.
- **Freezing the dough.** Wrap it in plastic, then seal it in a freezer bag. Use it within 6 weeks. Thaw it overnight in the fridge, never on the countertop.
- **Leftovers** go in the fridge within 2 hours. Reheat on a sheet pan at 350°F for about 10 minutes, until the center is soft again.
- **Honey** is not safe for babies under one year old.

BRING IT TO THE TABLE

Set the whole golden wheel on a white plate with apple slices, crackers and baguette around it. Floral plates set a beautiful table, but a white plate lets the colors and textures of the food be the art.

Let someone else make the first cut. That ooze is the best part of the party.