



Richard Bertinet

BREAD MAKING

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Mince pies – I used to say that I hated them, but not anymore. Now I love them!

FREE

SAMPLE LESSON #24
MINCE PIES

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The Lessons



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Every dough you make has its own character.

24. Mince Pies



MY KIND OF MINCE PIES

Mince pies – I used to say that I hated them, but not anymore. Now I love them!

Growing up in France I had never seen anything like mince pies, and I didn't understand the concept of mincemeat, which in Medieval times used to be made with real meat and fruit. Later beef suet was used instead – though now of course we use vegetable suet. When I tasted my first mince pie I wasn't impressed – there seemed to be so much pastry and not enough filling. So I began to experiment with my own version, adding my favourite of the baker's creams, frangipane (almond cream). A classic French tart is amandine, which is simply sweet pastry filled with frangipane, topped with toasted almonds, and baked, so I thought why not make my mince pies with a covering of frangipane instead of pastry, so that when you bite into the pie you experience three different sensations. The first time I made them this way they were an instant hit with family and friends, and I have been baking them every Christmas since.

Pastry is just another form of dough, and just as I always like to reassure people that anyone can make good bread, anyone can also make good pastry if you follow a few basic principles.

For my sweet pastry I still use the recipe I learned when I was about sixteen and serving my time as an apprentice baker. For Christmas, though, I add a little finely grated orange zest. For me orange is one of the special flavours of Christmas – perhaps it is because it reminds me of finding oranges in my Christmas stocking when I was a kid.



To continue my festive orange theme, I substitute orange liqueur for the traditional dash of rum in the frangipane and for the finishing touch I add a little candied orange zest to the sugar-dusted pies – if you want to do this there is a very simple recipe below.

You can buy a jar of good quality mincemeat, but it is also very easy and satisfying to make your own – so I have given a recipe for that too. Once packed into sterilised jars the mincemeat will keep for at least a year, so if you make plenty there will be enough for the following Christmas. A good tip is to make your mincemeat in January or February, when the fruit is usually much cheaper after the festive rush!

You can make the pastry in advance, as it can be kept for up to five days in the fridge or up to eight weeks in the freezer. And if you really want to get ahead, you can freeze the baked pies, then they can be defrosted at room temperature and you can warm them up for few minutes in a low oven (around 100-120°C) before serving.

Note: it is difficult to make pastry using smaller quantities of ingredients than I have given here, which is enough to make 48 mince pies – so you can keep some back to make a second batch, use the rest of the pastry for something else or if you want to make 48 mince pies in one go, just double the quantity of frangipane.



INGREDIENTS

MAKES 24 MINCE PIES

FOR THE SWEET PASTRY:

350g plain flour

A pinch of sea salt (about 5g)

Finely grated zest of a small unwaxed orange (or half a large one)

125g butter

125g caster sugar

1 egg yolk

2 eggs

FOR THE FILLING:

Either 1 x 400g jar of luxury mincemeat or homemade (see recipe below)

FOR THE FRANGIPANE:

125g unsalted butter, slightly softened

125g caster sugar

125g ground almonds

50g plain flour

2 eggs

2 tablespoons orange liqueur

TO DECORATE:

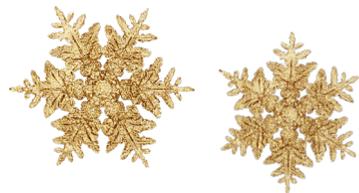
Flaked almonds

Icing sugar

Candied orange zest, optional (see recipe below)

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TO MAKE THE PASTRY

Put the flour into a mixing bowl and add the salt. Sprinkle in the orange zest and mix thoroughly.

You need the butter to be very cold, but soft, so place it, straight from the fridge, between two sheets of greaseproof paper and bash it with a rolling pin.

Put the whole piece of butter into the bowl of flour – there is no need to chop it up. Keep the sheets of greaseproof for buttering your mince pie trays.

Cover the butter well with flour and tear it into large pieces.

Now flake the flour and butter together. You need a light touch: with both hands, scoop up the flour-covered butter and flick your thumbs over the surface in a soft, skimming motion, as if you were dealing a pack of cards.

Keep plunging your hands into the bowl and continue with the light flicking action – no pressing or squeezing – making sure all the pieces of butter remain coated with flour.

The important thing now is not to overdo it. Don't be tempted to keep on rubbing in the butter until the mixture looks like breadcrumbs as if you do this, once you mix in your sugar and eggs it will become very sticky. Stop mixing when there are still some small shards of butter roughly the size of your little fingernail.

Add the sugar and blend it in lightly with your fingers.

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Now tip the whole eggs and extra yolk into the flour mixture. Use a plastic scraper to mix in the eggs, scraping around the sides of the bowl and pulling the mixture into the centre until the butter and eggs amalgamate with the flour and you have a rough dough.

Turn the dough out onto a work surface – don't be tempted to flour it first, as if you add more flour you risk the pastry becoming hard and it may crack when you roll it.

Now you need to work the dough a little so that it is nice and smooth.

I treat my pastry like any other dough, in that it has a 'top' and a 'bottom'.

Have the dough in a rough rectangle, then push down with your thumbs at the furthest point and roll the dough towards you. Flip it over, so the 'bottom' with its 'seam' is now upwards and turn it clockwise through 90 degrees clockwise. Press down with your thumbs as before, then flip over and turn again through 90 degrees, so that the top is uppermost. Repeat this sequence a few more times until the dough is smooth and homogenous. Finish with the top facing upwards.

Lightly flour your work surface, and also dust the surface of the dough very lightly. Gently, with a rolling pin, roll it into a flat, thick square and wrap in greaseproof paper – not clingfilm, as this will make the pastry sweaty.

I wrap my pastry as if it were a present. Lay the pastry on a big sheet of greaseproof paper, bring the top and bottom edges together and fold twice, then fold in the corners and tuck them underneath.

Put into the fridge to rest, ideally for at least an hour or overnight.

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TO MAKE THE FRANGIPANE

You want the almond cream to be very light, not dense and overpowering, and to achieve this it is important to add all the ingredients in a specific order – so have them all lined up ready to go before you start.

To make the frangipane by hand, put your softened butter into a mixing bowl, and 'cream' it, by spreading it around the bowl with a wooden spoon, then beat until it becomes whiter and lighter and forms little peaks.

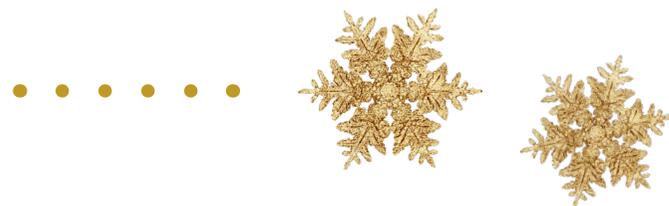
Next add half the sugar and beat in well, then add the rest.

Now add half the ground almonds, mix well, then add the remainder. Finally add the flour and work in well.

Beat in the eggs one at a time. The frangipane should be stiff enough to hold its shape on your spoon if you turn it over. Finally mix in the orange liqueur.

If you prefer to make the frangipane in a mixer, use a paddle attachment rather than a dough hook. Put the butter into the bowl and mix on medium speed until very soft. With the motor still running, add the sugar followed by the ground almonds and mix in. Turn the speed down while you add the flour, then put it back to medium, add the eggs one at a time, and finally the orange liqueur.

Put the frangipane into the fridge until you are ready to use it.





TO ASSEMBLE

Preheat the oven to 190°C. Use the greaseproof paper you kept back from softening the butter to grease two 12-hole mince pie trays.

Take your pastry from the fridge and cut in half. You only need half the pastry for this recipe, so keep the rest for a second batch of mince pies later, or for another recipe.

Soften the pastry slightly with your thumbs, then lightly dust your work surface and move the pastry around over it so that it is finely dusted on both sides.

Roll out the pastry, constantly moving it around in between every few rolls, and adding a little more flour if necessary to help it glide, until the pastry is 2-3mm thick. Using a 7cm cutter, cut out 24 rounds and gently press into the moulds in the tray.

Put a spoonful of mincemeat into each pastry case – don't overfill as you need to allow space for the frangipane.

Either pipe a mound of frangipane on top of the mincemeat, or use a spoon. You don't need to spread out the frangipane as it will do this by itself in the oven.

Sprinkle the top of each pie generously with flaked almonds.

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Anyone can make good pastry.



Bake in the pre-heated oven for around 16-18 minutes until golden brown – but keep checking; remember every oven is different. Remove from the moulds and transfer to a wire rack to cool.

At this point the pies can be frozen between layers of greaseproof paper in a freezer box until Christmas (see note in the introduction).

When the pies are cool, use a small sieve to dust them in icing sugar, so they look as if they have been covered in a light fall of snow!

If you want to make the pies extra special, finish each one with a tiny touch of candied orange zest.



HOMEMADE MINCEMEAT

The mincemeat will mature with age, so although it can be used after a few days, ideally wait at least two months. It will keep for a year in sealed, sterilised jars, so it is worth making plenty for next Christmas too though of course you can scale the quantities down if you prefer, or give some away to friends.

MAKES ENOUGH TO FILL AROUND 5-6 x 400g JARS

4 medium eating or cooking apples

Zest and juice of 3 oranges

500g sultanas or raisins

500g currants

500g vegetable suet

1kg soft brown sugar

100g mixed peel, finely chopped

50g chopped blanched almonds

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon ground ginger

125g brandy

100g orange liqueur



Preheat the oven to 200°C.

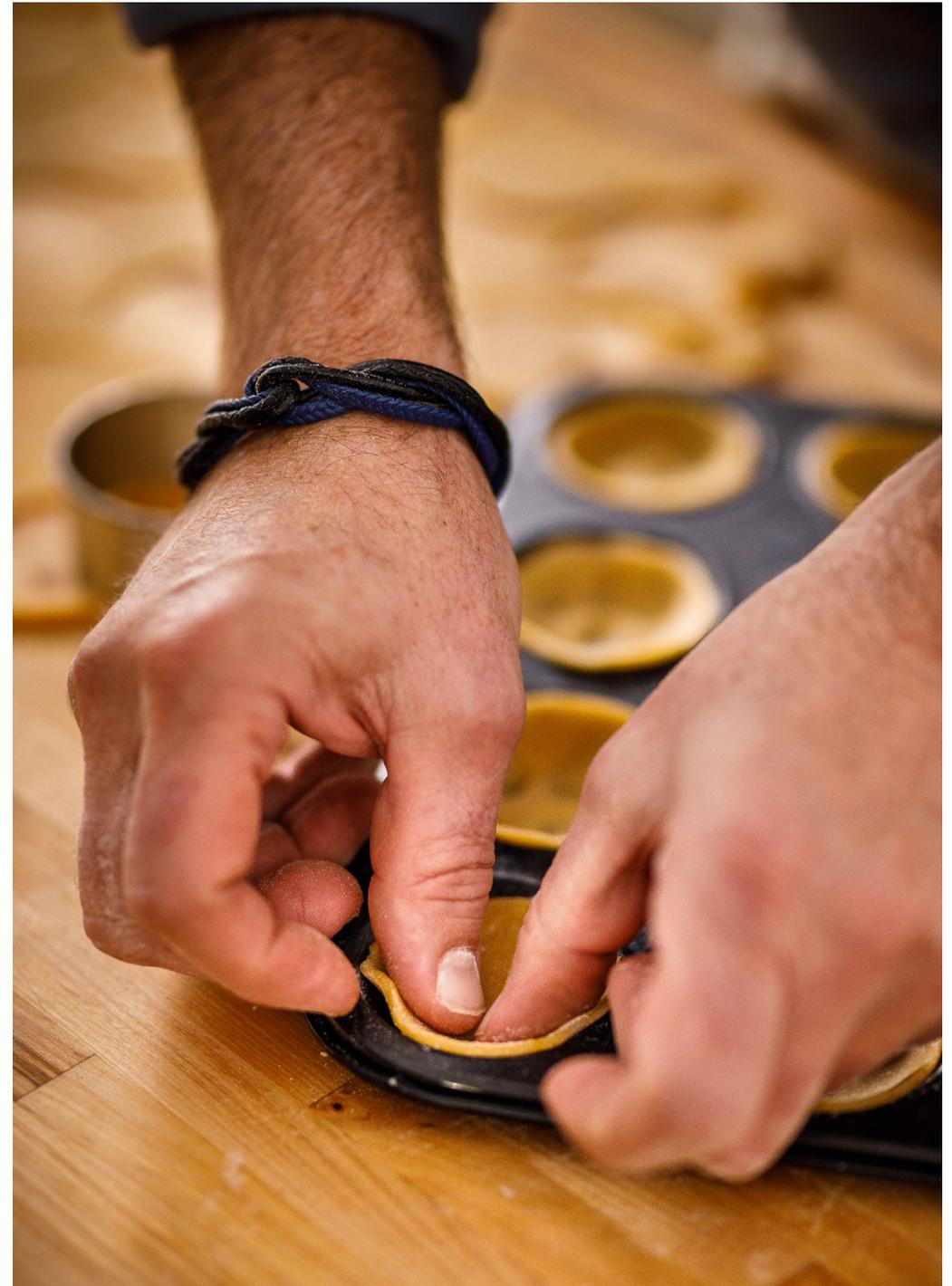
Score the apples around the centre and put into an ovenproof dish. Bake for 1 hour or until soft.

Put the apples into a sieve or ricer and push the pulp through into a large bowl.

Add the orange juice and zest, then stir in the rest of the ingredients.

Cover the mincemeat and leave it in a cool place for a couple of days, giving an occasional stir. Spoon into sterilised jars, taking care to remove any air bubbles. Seal and store in the larder.

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TO MAKE CANDIED ORANGE ZEST

5 oranges
200g caster sugar
200g water

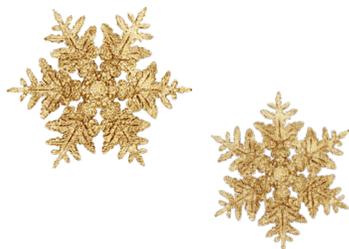
Remove the zest from the oranges using a zester if you have one. If not, remove strips of peel with a peeler and scrape off any of the white pith that clings it.

Finely slice the peel into thin strips. Make the sugar syrup by combining the sugar and water in a small pan. Place over a medium heat and let the sugar dissolve, then bring it to the point where it is just bubbling and allow the syrup to thicken and reduce a little.

Put the orange zest into the syrup and allow to simmer for 10 to 15 minutes until it becomes soft and translucent.

Have a sheet of greaseproof paper ready. Lift the peel from the syrup onto the paper using a slotted spoon, letting as much of the syrup drain off into the pan as possible.

Leave to cool down completely until the shreds of zest are dry and crunchy. If you are not using them straight away, you can keep them in a small jar.



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BREAD MAKING

BY RICHARD BERTINET

Learn the magic of the Bertinet kitchen in the comfort of yours. From baguettes to babka buns and ciabatta to challah, your dough is in good hands as Richard guides you through the carefully refined recipes and processes necessary for baking the perfect bread. The accompanying course notes give you the freedom to create your own bespoke loaves once you have mastered the Bertinet bakes.

- 24 LESSONS
- OVER 6 HOURS OF VIDEO CONTENT
- 83 PAGES OF COURSE NOTES TO ENCOURAGE YOUR LEARNING

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