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A Shortcut to Flaky Puff Pastry

Classic puff pastry takes half a day to make, but this shortcut version, called rough puff pastry, is ready to use in an hour or less

by *Molly Stevens*

When I was learning to cook, I thought of mastering puff pastry as a rite of passage from the merely eager to the expert. Making this delicate, flaky pastry usually takes at least half a day, but the result—hundreds of puffed, crisp, and buttery layers—was, in my mind, the ultimate kitchen achievement.

Then I discovered that most chefs use a shortcut method known as rough puff pastry (also called blitz and half pastry) that takes only a fraction of the time. Though the results are not quite as spectacular in terms of height, rough puff pastry is just as irresistibly flaky, buttery, and tender as traditional puff pastry.

Use rough puff pastry to make turnovers, mille-feuilles, cheese straws, and cream horns, or use it as a [crust for tarts](#), [quiches](#), and [pot pies](#).

Video: Watch Abby Johnson Dodge demonstrate [how to make rough puff pastry for an elegant Pear-Hazelnut Tart in a Puff-Pastry Crust](#).



Quick puff pastry is ideal for crisp, buttery pastries and crusts. Begin with a hot oven (450°F) to get the puff and then lower the temperature to finish baking.

What to Make with Puff Pastry

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Different means to similar ends

Classic puff pastry begins with a basic dough called a *détrempe* (pronounced day-trahmp) that is rolled out and wrapped around a slab of butter. The dough is then repeatedly rolled, folded, and turned. The goal is to distribute the butter evenly in sheets throughout the dough. When the pastry bakes, the moisture in the butter creates steam, causing the dough to puff and separate into many layers.

Making classic puff pastry takes a lot of time because the dough needs lengthy rests after the initial *détrempe* stage and between its many "turns" (each series of rolling, folding, and turning).

There are a few ways to abbreviate the process of making puff pastry, all with the goal of distributing bits of butter throughout the dough. The method I find most streamlined is a cross between classic puff pastry and basic pie crust. You cut the butter into the flour as if making pie crust, but instead of simply rolling out the crust, you give the dough a quick series of turns and folds as you would for puff pastry.

Rough puff pastry has a ragged start

When teaching how to make rough puff pastry, I've found that the only tricky part is getting my students to believe that the crumbly pile of butter, flour, and scant water will actually become a smooth, workable dough. The temptation is to add more water to bind the dough, but excess water would only make the dough tough.



[Sift the flour and salt onto cold cubes of butter. For a deliciously rich pastry, use an equal weight of](#)

butter and flour.

In my [Rough Puff Pastry](#) recipe, I use the same weight of butter as of flour, and about half that weight of water. So for 12 ounces each of flour and butter (about 2-1/2 cups flour and 24 tablespoons butter -- the volume by weight of flour and butter are not equal), use 6 ounces of water (3/4 cup -- the weight and volume of water are the same). Add the water a little at a time since you may need less.



Cut the butter into the flour. Using a pastry scraper or a large chef's knife, work until you have a crumbly mixture. Flatten any large chunks of butter with just your fingertips.



Add the ice-cold water a little at a time to bind the dough loosely. Mix the dough with the pastry scraper until it just hangs together.

more info... [Hints for tender, flaky dough](#)

- Use a little cake flour for the most tender dough. All-purpose is fine, but one part cake flour to three parts all-purpose is better.
- Keep everything cold. Keeping the dough chilled as you work is important to the success of any puff pastry -- otherwise, the butter melts and will no longer form distinct layers. Freeze both the flour and the butter before beginning. Also, keep your warm hands off the dough as much as possible. If the dough gets warm, chill it for at least 15 minutes before continuing.
- Keep the dough neat for a uniform puff. Use a large rolling pin and roll evenly from open end to open end. Square off the sides with a rolling pin or pastry scraper as you work.
- Bake the dough on a slightly dampened baking sheet. This holds down the underside of the dough as the rest puffs up. Bake in a very hot oven (about 450°F) for the initial puff and turn the heat down to finish.

Coax the first few folds with a pastry scraper As you can see from the step-by-step photos below, the first few times you try to fold the dough, it will crumble. Don't worry: around the fourth turn, the dough will become smooth and solid. Once this happens, I give the dough one more turn and then fold it into a book fold to give it even more layers. The dough then needs to rest, but for only half an hour -- enough time to work on the filling. The dough then gets two more turns. At this point you can go ahead and use it, but another rest will make it even easier

to roll and shape. You can refrigerate the dough for up to two days or freeze it for up to a month.

Step-by-Step: From shaggy dough to flaky layers

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Wrap the dough and chill it for half an hour before giving it two final turns. You can then use the dough, though another short rest will make rolling and shaping easier.

Photos: Scott Phillips

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