

Star topped mince pies

A festive essential!



Makes 22



INGREDIENTS

Pastry:

240 g cake flour

60 g vegetable shortening, cut into small cubes

60 g butter, cut into small cubes

juice of 1 orange (about 120 ml)

pinch of salt

extra flour for dusting

Filling:

450 g fruit mince meat

2 apples

15 ml (1 tbsp) brandy (optional)

icing sugar for dusting

DIRECTIONS

1. Place the flour in a bowl. Add the shortening and butter. Toss in the flour then put the dish in the freezer for 20 minutes.
2. Mix the orange juice and salt in a small bowl. Refrigerate while the flour is in the freezer.
3. Tip the flour and butter into a food processor and blitz together until combined. Add most of the orange juice and blitz until the dough starts coming together. Add more orange juice if necessary. (If you need extra liquid add some ice water.)
4. Tip the mixture onto your work surface and knead into a dough. Flatten the dough into a disc, wrap and refrigerate for 20 minutes.
5. To prepare the filling: Tip the fruit mince into a bowl. Grate the apples (you can leave the skin on) and squeeze out the excess juice. Mix into the fruit mince along with the brandy if you are using it.
6. Preheat your oven to 220°C and lightly grease your tin.
7. Dust your work surface lightly with flour. Roll the pastry out to a thickness of 2-3mm. You want it to be very thin! Cut out circles that are slightly bigger than your tart tin and gently press into the tin. Add a small dollop of fruit mince to each. (Don't overfill or the fruit mince will bubble over edge.)
8. Re-roll the leftover dough, cut out stars and pop these on top of the fruit mince. Bake the tray for 10-15 minutes or until the pastry is golden and cooked through. Miniature mince pies only need to bake for 8-10 minutes. Carefully transfer the hot mince pies to a cooling rack. Repeat the whole process using the remaining pastry and fruit mince.
9. Dust the warm mince pies with icing sugar and serve.

****I used a 6½ cm muffin tray with a depth of 2 cm, a 10 cm round fluted cutter and a 6 cm (point to point) star cutter.**
You can use any sized pan as this recipe works for large, medium sized and mini mince pies. Simply adjust the size of your cutters and the baking time accordingly.

Christmas biscuit truffles

With ginger and orange

 Makes 30



INGREDIENTS

fondant icing, for decorations
(optional)
100 g chocolate digestive biscuits
100 g ginger biscuits
30 ml (2 tbsp) cocoa powder
15 ml (1 tbsp) finely grated orange zest
100 g desiccated coconut
1 x 385 g tin condensed milk
5 ml (1 tsp) vanilla extract
140 g dark chocolate
sprinkles, for decorating (optional)
gold edible glitter

DIRECTIONS

1. If you are preparing fondant decorations like holly leaves and berries do this first. Store your fondant shapes in an airtight container until it's time to decorate.
2. Place the biscuits in a ziplock bag and use a rolling pin to crush until fine. Tip into a mixing bowl.
3. Add the cocoa, orange zest and coconut and stir. Add the condensed milk and vanilla. Mix well until evenly combined. Chill the mixture for 45 minutes or until firm enough to roll.
4. Line a small tray with baking paper. Roll teaspoonfuls of the mixture into balls and arrange on the tray. If the mixture is sticky sprinkle a little water on your hands. Set aside in the fridge.
5. Line another tray with baking paper. Melt the dark chocolate then dip a cookie ball into it. Allow the excess chocolate to drip off, then carefully transfer to the baking paper to dry and set. Repeat with the remaining cookie balls. Add the fondant decorations and/or sprinkles to the truffles while they are still wet so that they stick easily.
6. Once the chocolate has set finish with a dusting of glitter and serve.

Chocolate & walnut Yule log

with cream cheese filling

 8 servings



INGREDIENTS

Chocolate cake:

butter for greasing
80 ml (⅓ cup) flour
30 ml (2 tbsp) cocoa
2.5 ml (½ tsp) baking powder
pinch of salt
3 large eggs
80 ml (⅓ cup) castor sugar

Cream cheese filling:

50 g butter, softened
5 ml (1 tsp) vanilla extract
75 g icing sugar
125 g smooth full fat cream cheese
80 ml (⅓ cup) walnuts, finely chopped

Chocolate buttercream:

125 g butter
375 ml (1½ cups) icing sugar
45 ml (3 tbsp) cocoa
30 ml (2 tbsp) warm milk
5 ml (1 tsp) vanilla extract
dark chocolate curls for decorating
icing sugar for dusting

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat your oven to 190°C. Line a Swiss roll tin with greased baking paper. Let the paper hang over the long sides of the tin to help you lift the cake out once baked.
2. Sift the flour, cocoa, baking powder and salt into a bowl. Set aside.
3. Place the eggs and sugar in a separate bowl. Whisk together for 8–10 minutes until thick, pale and doubled in volume.
4. Sift half of the dry ingredients into the egg mixture and fold in gently. Repeat with the other half of the dry ingredients.
5. Pour the batter into the tin and gently coax it into an even layer. Bake for 10 minutes or until just baked through.
6. Remove the tray from the oven, then gently lift the baking paper and cake out of the tin. Working from one long end to the other carefully roll the hot cake in the paper. Set aside to cool completely.
7. For the cream cheese filling: Whisk the butter and vanilla together until combined and fluffy. Sift in the icing sugar and whisk again until everything comes together. Add the cream cheese and whisk just until the icing is smooth. Lastly, stir in the walnuts.
8. Carefully unroll the cold cake and peel away the paper. Spread the filling over the top of the cake in an even layer. Roll the cake up again, cover and refrigerate.
9. For the icing: Whisk the butter until creamy. Sift in the icing sugar and cocoa and whisk to bring together. Add the milk and vanilla. Whisk again until smooth.
10. Cut off about ⅓ of the cake at an angle. Apply some icing to the slanted side then place the cut off piece alongside the main cake to look like a small branch. Ice the cake with the icing.
11. Decorate with chocolate curls and use a fork to make patterns on the ends of the cake. Dust with icing sugar just before serving.

Festive chocolate & coconut cookies

Filled with chocolate ganache



Makes 12



INGREDIENTS

Cookies:

- 125 g butter
- 100 g light brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- 5 ml (1 tsp) vanilla essence
- 215 g flour
- 2.5 ml ($\frac{1}{2}$ tsp) baking powder
- 50 g desiccated coconut
- assorted cookie cutters
- icing sugar, for dusting

Ganache:

- 100 g milk or dark chocolate, finely chopped
- 50 ml pouring cream

DIRECTIONS

1. Cream the butter and sugar for a few minutes until light and fluffy. Add the egg and vanilla and beat together.
2. Sift in the flour and baking powder. Add the coconut and mix until just combined into a dough. Wrap in plastic and refrigerate for 30 minutes. While the dough is chilling preheat the oven to 170°C and line a tray with baking paper.
3. Lightly flour your work surface and roll out the dough. Cut out your desired shapes. If you are using more than one cutter make sure that there are pairs of two to match up later. Use a small cutter to create a cut out in half of the cookies.
4. Arrange the cookies on the tray and bake for 12 minutes, or until the edges are starting to turn golden. Transfer to a cooling rack and set aside to cool completely.
5. For the ganache place the chocolate in a small bowl. Heat the cream on the stove just until it starts to boil. Pour the cream over the chocolate and leave to stand for a minute. Whisk until smooth. Set aside to thicken to a spreading consistency.
6. Arrange the cookies with cut outs on the tray and dust with icing sugar. Spread a teaspoon or two of ganache on the remaining cookies and sandwich each one together with it's matching, sugar-dusted partner.

Chocolate gingerbread cake

With double choc buttercream icing



8-10 servings



INGREDIENTS

Cake:

150 g butter, softened

250 g brown sugar

100 g molasses

2 large eggs

280 ml buttermilk

275 g cake flour

25 g cocoa

10 ml (2 tsp) ground ginger

5 ml (1 tsp) ground cinnamon

15 ml (1 tbsp) baking powder

1.25 ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ tsp) fine salt

Double chocolate frosting:

100 g 70% dark chocolate

150 g unsalted butter, room temp

5 ml (1 tsp) vanilla extract

230 g icing sugar

15 g cocoa

5-10 ml (1-2 tsp) milk, if needed

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line the base of two 20cm round cake tins and grease well.
2. Cream the butter and sugar together for 5 minutes until fluffy. Whisk in the molasses. Add the eggs one at a time and whisk to incorporate. Scrape down the sides of the bowl, add the buttermilk and mix again until well combined.
3. Sift the flour, cocoa, ginger, cinnamon, baking powder and salt into the bowl. Whisk until just combined.
4. Divide the cake batter between the prepared cake tins and smooth into an even layer. Bake for 45-50 minutes or until an inserted skewer comes out clean. Set aside to cool completely.
5. To make the frosting melt the chocolate and set aside to cool. Whip the butter until fluffy. Drizzle the cooled chocolate into the butter while whipping. Mix in the vanilla.
6. Sift the icing sugar and cocoa into the bowl and mix to combine. Add a teaspoon or two of milk if the frosting is too thick.
7. Place one cake layer on a plate and spread half of the icing on top. Place the second cake layer on top and ice with the remaining frosting.

Holiday pull-apart buns

With cranberries & pistachios

 Makes 12



INGREDIENTS

Dough:

- 150 ml milk
- 1 sachet (7 g) instant dry yeast
- 560 ml (2¼ cups) flour + extra for dusting
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) castor sugar
- pinch of salt
- 10 ml (2 tsp) cinnamon
- 1 large egg
- 5 ml (1 tsp) vanilla extract
- 60–90 ml (4–5 tbsp) warm water

Filling:

- 100 g butter, softened
- 60 ml (¼ cup) brown sugar
- 5 ml (1 tsp) cinnamon
- 5 ml (1 tsp) ginger
- 1.25 ml (¼ tsp) cloves
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) finely grated orange zest
- 125 ml (½ cup) dried cranberries
- 80 ml (⅓ cup) shelled pistachios, chopped
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) honey

Cream cheese icing:

- 125 ml (½ cup) cream cheese
- 2.5 ml (½ tsp) vanilla extract
- 160 ml (⅔ cup) icing sugar

DIRECTIONS

1. To make the dough warm the milk in a small bowl or jug (be careful not to make it too hot). Stir in the yeast and set aside.
2. Sift the flour, sugar, salt and cinnamon into a mixing bowl. Whisk the egg and vanilla together lightly with a fork to combine. Add the egg mixture to the dry ingredients along with the milk and yeast. Mix together adding warm water as you go until you have soft dough.
3. Sprinkle some flour onto your work surface and tip the dough onto it. Knead the dough for 10 minutes until soft and stretchy. Place the dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover and leave in warm place for an hour to rise.
4. While the dough is rising make the filling. Mix the butter and sugar together well. Mix in the cinnamon, ginger, cloves and orange zest. Set aside.
5. Lightly flour your surface and roll the dough out into a rectangle about 40 cm x 30 cm. Spread the butter mixture over the dough. If it is not spreading easily pop the butter in the microwave for a few seconds but take care not to melt it – it should be soft but not liquid!
6. Sprinkle the cranberries and pistachios over the butter mixture. Roll the pastry into a log, starting at one of the long ends. Use a sharp knife to cut the loaf into 12 slices.
7. Grease a 23 cm cake tin well and line the base with baking paper. Arrange the slices in the tin and leave in a warm place for 30 minutes to rise a second time. Preheat your oven to 180°C.
8. Bake the buns for 25 minutes or until baked through. Warm the honey in the microwave for a few seconds until runny then brush over the buns while they are warm. Leave to cool while you make the icing.
9. Place the cream cheese and vanilla in a bowl and whisk until smooth. Sift in the icing sugar and whisk again until just combined and smooth. Take care not to over mix.
10. Drizzle or spread the icing over the cooled buns and serve.

Peanut butter & choc stars

Dainty after dinner treats

 Makes 30



INGREDIENTS

100 g smooth peanut butter
50 g butter, softened
2.5 ml ($\frac{1}{2}$ tsp) vanilla essence
130 g icing sugar
3 cm star cutter, or small cutter of your choice
200 g dark chocolate (or chocolate of choice), melted
cake sprinkles and glitter, to decorate (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Line a tray with baking paper. Whisk the peanut butter and butter together in a bowl until smooth and evenly combined. Whisk in the vanilla essence.
2. Sift the icing sugar into the bowl and mix together into a soft dough. Roll the dough out between two pieces of baking paper to a thickness of about 1.5cm.
3. Cut out 3cm stars or shape of your choice. Use a spatula to carefully lift and transfer these to the tray. Gather the scraps, re-roll and cut out more stars. Freeze for 30–60 minutes until firm.
4. Remove half of the stars from the freezer and dip in the dark chocolate. Drain any excess chocolate and transfer to another piece of baking paper. Decorate with sprinkles and glitter and leave to set. Dip the remaining stars and decorate. Store in a cool place.