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Petite Almond Cream Puffs

Makes about 24 petite cream puffs, or 12 larger cream puffs

Cream Puff Shells Ingredients

Makes about 24 small puffs, or 12 larger puffs

1/2 cup water
1/2 cup milk
8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon sugar
1-1/4 cups all-purpose flour
6 large eggs

Almond Pastry Cream Filling Ingredients

Makes about 3.5 cups

3 cups whole milk
3/4 cup sugar
Pinch of salt
6 large egg yolks
6 tablespoons cornstarch
1-1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
1 teaspoon almond extract
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, room temperature

White Chocolate Ganache Topping Ingredients

Makes about 1.5 cups

4 oz. cream cheese
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
3 oz. white chocolate
1/2 teaspoon almond extract
1 cup confectioner's sugar
Sprinkles (optional)

DIRECTIONS:

Petite Cream Puff Shells

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Prepare two baking sheets by lining them with parchment paper or silicone baking mats.
2. In a 3 quart saucier pan, bring the water, milk, and butter to a boil. Add the salt and sugar and stir until dissolved.

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3. Remove the pan from heat and in one motion add the flour. Stir the mixture vigorously until combined. Return to the burner and continue to stir until the mixture stays away from the sides of a pan. Cool the dough until it's just warm to the touch, or measures about 130°F.
4. Move the forming dough into the bowl of a stand mixer, or a mixing bowl. Using the stand mixer's paddle attachment, add 5 of the eggs one at a time, (reserving the 6th for an egg wash to be applied just prior to baking). Incorporate each egg before adding the next. Continue beating after the last egg for a couple of minutes or until smooth.
5. Drop spoonfuls (about 2 tablespoons each) of the batter on to the lined baking sheets, twelve petite puffs on each sheet. Whisk the final egg with a couple teaspoons of water to make an egg wash. Brush the egg wash over the top and sides of the dough mounds.
6. Bake in the preheated 425°F oven for 10 minutes, then reduce the heat to 350°F and continue baking for another 15 minutes. The pastries should be evenly golden brown all over.
7. Immediately after removing from the oven, cut the tops off the puffs with a serrated knife to allow steam to escape. This will assist greatly in the puffs retaining their shape. Once cooled, fill and serve.

Directions:

Almond Pastry Cream

1. In a saucier pan, bring the milk, 1/4 cup of the sugar, and salt to a boil. Remove from heat.
2. In a small mixing bowl, whisk together the egg yolks, cornstarch, and remaining sugar (1/2 cup).
3. Temper the eggs by drizzling 1/4 cup of the hot milk mixture into the eggs whisking continuously. Continue adding the hot milk slowly while whisking until all is incorporated.
4. Transfer the mixture back to the saucier pan and cook over medium to medium-high heat while continuously whisking, about 3-4 minutes. The mixture will thicken nicely and should reach a temperature of 165°F. Remove from heat. Add the vanilla and almond flavorings; stir well.
5. Cut the room temperature butter into a half-inch dice. Add the pieces to the thickened custard and whisk until the butter melts and becomes incorporated.

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6. Transfer the pastry cream to a glass bowl; place a piece of plastic wrap directly on the top of the mixture to prevent the formation of a skin. Allow it to cool to room temperature, then refrigerate for at least an hour or up to two days.

7. When serving time arrives, spoon a generous amount of the almond pastry cream into the bottom of each cream puff shell. Cover with the top half of the cream puff shell. Add the White Chocolate Ganache Topping if desired, embellish and serve.

Directions:

White Chocolate Ganache Topping

1. With the cream cheese and butter at room temperature, beat together until evenly combined.
2. Drizzle the melted white chocolate into the cream cheese-butter mixture and mix well. (Note: white chocolate has a much lower melting point than bittersweet chocolate. We prefer to melt white chocolate in a heatproof bowl over barely simmering water.)
3. Add the almond extract and beat the mixture until light and fluffy.
4. Gradually add the powdered sugar beating well after each addition to keep the icing light and smooth.
5. Spoon a dollop of the icing onto each filled cream puff. Garnish and embellish as desired. Serve immediately.