

# Cream Puffs

The same easy pastry batter makes the light and airy confections we know as cream puffs, and chocolate éclairs. Cream puffs, round and fat, are filled with whipped cream and dusted with a blizzard of confectioners' sugar. Pipe the batter into longer ropes, you end up with log-shaped éclairs, ready to be filled with pastry cream and drizzled with chocolate icing.

## Pastry shells

- 1 cup water
- 1/2 cup (8 tablespoons) unsalted butter
- 3/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/4 cups Unbleached All-Purpose Flour
- 4 large eggs

## Cream puff filling

- 2 cups heavy or whipping cream
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar, or to taste
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract



## Day #1: Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Lightly grease (or line with parchment) two baking sheets.
2. Combine the water, butter, and salt in a medium-sized saucepan, heat until the butter has melted, and bring to a rolling boil.
3. Remove the pan from the heat, and add the flour all at once, stirring vigorously.
4. Return the pan to the burner and cook over medium heat, stirring all the while, until the mixture smooths out and follows the spoon around the pan; this should take less than a minute. (Pate a Choux Dough )
5. Remove the pan from the heat, and let the mixture cool for 5 to 10 minutes. It'll still feel hot, but you should be able to hold a finger in it for a few seconds. If you have an instant-read thermometer, the temperature should be below 125°F.

6. Transfer the mixture to a mixer, and beat in the eggs one at a time; it'll look curdled at first, but when you add the last egg it should become smooth. Beat for at least 2 minutes after adding the last egg.
7. Using a generously filled tablespoon cookie scoop, or a level muffin scoop, drop the thick batter onto the prepared baking sheets in 3- to 4-tablespoon mounds. Space the mounds about 3" apart, to allow for expansion.
8. Bake the pastries for 15 minutes, then reduce the oven temperature to 350°F and bake for an additional 25 minutes, until pastries are a medium golden brown. Don't open the oven door while the pastries are baking.
9. Remove the pastries from the oven. Make a small slit in the top of each, and return them to the oven for 5 minutes, to allow the steam to escape. Place them on a rack to cool. When they're cool enough to handle, split each in half to make top and bottom pieces; splitting and exposing the centers to air will help keep them from becoming soggy.

## **Day #2: To make the cream puff filling:**

1. Pour the cream into a mixing bowl, and begin to whip it on high speed (using your mixer's whisk attachment, if you have one).
2. Sprinkle in the sugar gradually as the cream whips.
3. Whip until stiff, but be careful not to over- whip; cream should still look smooth.
4. Fill the bottom halves of the puffs with whipped cream, then replace their tops. Dust with confectioners' sugar, and serve.

## **Tips**

- Want to make profiteroles? Fill cream puff shells with ice cream, and drizzle with the sauce of your choice; chocolate is traditional.
- Our pastry cream filling mix is a real time-saver; you'll need about 3 cups. Or, pour 3 cups milk into a bowl (the higher-fat the milk, the richer the filling); add the contents of 2 regular-size boxes of vanilla instant pudding mix, plus 2 teaspoons vanilla extract. Beat until thick, and refrigerate until ready to use.
- If you want to make the whipped cream a day ahead, be sure to stabilize it with whipped cream stabilizer. If you don't, it'll become watery overnight.
- To shape éclairs without a pastry bag, place a sandwich bag into a glass, rolling its edge over the rim to hold it in place. Spoon the batter into the bag. Cut off 1 corner of the bag, making a 1/2" cut. Squeeze the batter onto the baking sheet through the hole in the corner.
- Want to prepare pastries ahead? Make the shells, and store them at room temperature, lightly covered. Your best bet is to whip the cream no more than several hours ahead of time, unless you stabilize it with whipped cream stabilizer (see tip above). Pastry cream filling/pudding can be made several days ahead. Icing can be made several days ahead, and reheated. Fill (and ice) pastries just before serving.