

Pasta Choux (Choux Pastry)

Makes 1½ pounds dough

Pasta choux (choux pastry) is a precooked paste that is shaped and baked in the oven. Pasta choux paste is simply made by cooking water, flour, and eggs and vigorously stirring until smooth. The soft paste is piped from a pastry bag to create different shapes. During baking, steam releases from the dough, causing it to expand into a light and crispy hollow shell often referred to as a “bun.” The more popular shapes are the bigné (cream puffs or profiteroles) or éclairs. The buns are often filled with various creams like Crema Chantilly (page 12), Crema Pasticcera (page 10), or gelato. The filled buns can be simply topped with confectioner’s sugar or more decadently with crema ganache (chocolate ganache), caramel, or fruit coulis. Choux buns can be made in advance but should be filled just prior to serving. Store choux buns in resealable bags at room temperature for up to two days or in an airtight container in the freezer for up to one month. When ready to use, defrost and warm in a preheated 350°F (180°C) oven for a few minutes until crisp.

1 cup (240 ml) water

½ cup (113 g) unsalted butter, cut into 16 equal pieces

2 teaspoons sugar

½ teaspoon salt

1 cup plus 2 tablespoons (140 g) all-purpose flour, sifted

4 large eggs, at room temperature

1. In a medium saucepan, bring the water, butter, sugar, and salt to a rolling boil over medium-high heat, stirring gently with a wooden spoon.

2. When the mixture begins to boil, add the flour all at once and stir vigorously until the paste reaches an internal temperature of 175°F (80°C), pulls away from the sides of the pan, and forms a ball, about 1 minute. Remove from the heat.

3. Allow the paste to cool, stirring a couple of times, to a temperature of 120°F (50°C), about 2 minutes.

4. Add the eggs one at a time, making sure each egg is well incorporated before adding the next, stirring vigorously until well combined and the paste is smooth.