

Salt and Serenity

Salted Caramel Apple Hamentashen

The filling for these hamentashen is the genius creation of Tori Avey, the talented blogger over at www.toriavey.com. I have slightly adapted it. Uri Scheft owner of Breads Bakery in New York City and Lehamim Bakery in Tel Aviv created the dough recipe.

Dulce de leche is readily available in most Latin American grocery stores. You could also substitute ready-made caramel sauce.

Makes 30 hamentashen

Almond Shortbread Dough:

230 grams (2 sticks) cold butter

100 grams (1 scant cup) icing sugar

50 grams (¼ cup) granulated sugar

1½ large eggs (90 grams), beaten

400 grams (3 cups plus 2 Tablespoons), all-purpose flour, plus extra for dusting and rolling

50 grams (½ cup) almond flour (I like Bob's Redmill brand)

5 grams (1 teaspoon) fine sea salt

Salted Caramel Apple Filling:

2 medium Granny Smith apples

75 grams (⅓ cup) granulated sugar

120 grams (½ cup) water

¼ cup dulce de leche

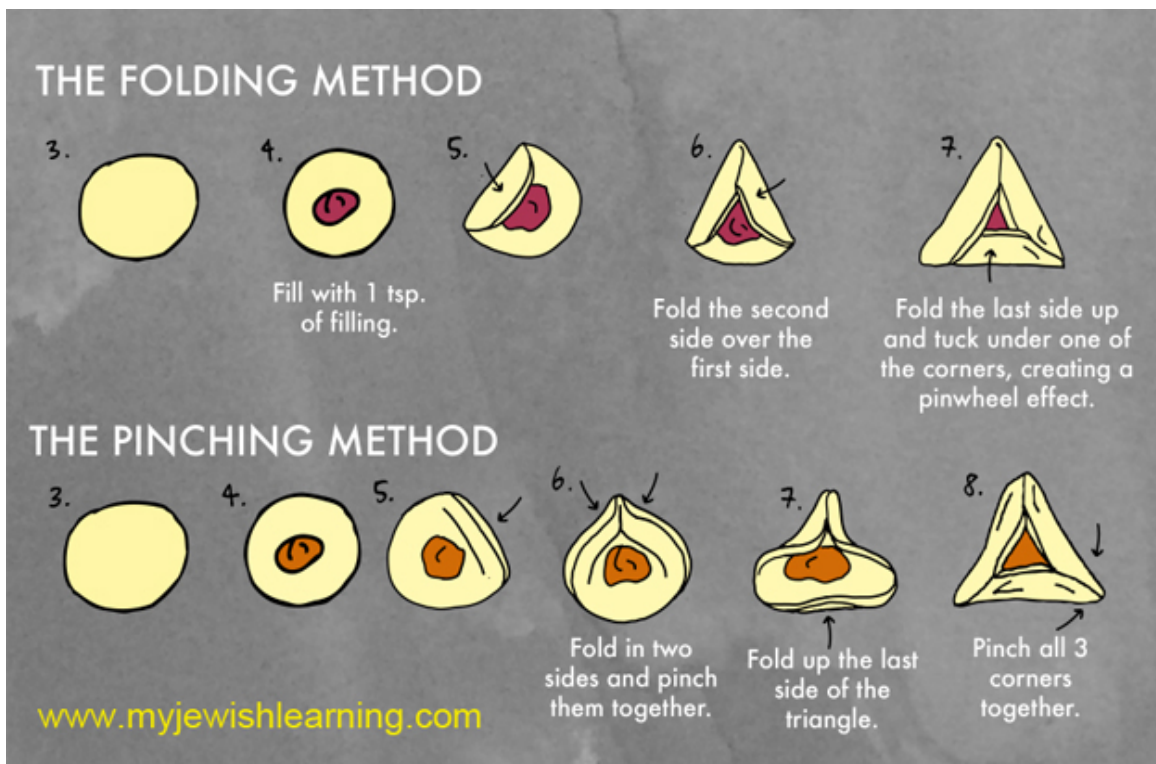
¼ teaspoon kosher salt

½ cup room temperature water

Maldon or other coarse sea salt for sprinkling on top

1. Make almond shortbread dough: Set the butter on a piece of parchment paper and whack it with a rolling pin. You want to soften the butter, but keep it cold. Place the smashed butter, confectioners sugar and granulated sugar in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, and mix on low speed until combined, about 30 seconds. Increase the speed to medium low and beat for 30 more seconds, until everything is well mixed, but not airy.
2. Add the beaten eggs and mix on low speed until just combined. Add the all purpose flour, almond flour and salt and mix just until almost combined. Dump dough out onto the counter and use your hands to fold and work the dough until it comes together Finishing the dough by hand prevents overmixing and ensures a tender dough.

3. Divide dough into 2 pieces and roll each piece, between 2 sheets of parchment paper, into a 10 x 14 inch rectangle, about 1/4 inch thick. Chill rolled dough in fridge for one hour. (Dough will keep in fridge for 5 days or can be frozen for up to a month.)
4. Peel and core the apples. Shred them using a hand grater or food processor shredding attachment.
5. In a medium saucepan, combine the sugar and ½ cup of water. Bring to a boil.
6. Add the shredded apples to the boiling water and return to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and let the mixture simmer for 15-20 minutes, stirring occasionally, till most of the liquid evaporates and the mixture resembles a very thick applesauce. When the mixture is ready, it will start to sizzle lightly in the pan and clump together when you stir it. Don't let the mixture burn, but do let it get quite thick.
7. Stir in the dulce de leche; add salt to taste. The salt adds depth and gives the flavor of a salted caramel. It also offsets the sweetness a bit. Note that the filling is quite sweet on its own (it may initially taste "too sweet"), but it bakes to perfection when used for filling hamentashen. Let the mixture cool. Refrigerate mixture for at least 1 hour before using it to fill hamentashen; this will thicken it and make it easier to manage when filling.
8. Adjust the oven racks to the upper and lower middle positions and preheat the oven to 350°F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
9. Remove one dough sheet from the fridge and place on work surface. Peel off top parchment sheet and gently lay it back in place. Flip the dough over; peel off and set top parchment layer aside. Use a 3 inch round cookie cutter (or upside down glass) to stamp out as many rounds as possible, leaving as little space between them as possible so that you do not have too many scraps. Place rounds on parchment lined baking sheet, setting them 1½ inches apart. Set scraps aside. Repeat with second sheet of dough.
10. Gather scraps and roll between 2 sheets of parchment to an 1/4 inch thickness. Chill for 30 minutes and cut out more rounds. Place them on a parchment lined cookie sheet.
11. Brush the edge of each circle with water. Using a spoon or piping bag, place about 1 scant tablespoon of filling in the center of each round. Don't overfill hamentashen, or filling will ooze out when you bake them.
12. Hamentashen can be folded or pinched closed. Try a few of each kind to see which way you like better. I found an excellent tutorial on www.myjewishlearning.com.



13. Form hamantaschen using the pinching or folding method, as pictured above. Sprinkle each hamantaschen with a tiny bit of coarse salt.
14. Bake 2 trays of hamantaschen at once. Bake for 8 minutes. Switch position of trays and bake for a further 8-9 minutes, until golden brown. Cool hamantaschen on baking sheets set upon cooling racks. Store cooled hamantaschen in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 days.