

# Empanadas

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Oct. 10-15 the city will host the annual TangoFest (see portlandtango.com), attracting enthusiasts from around the world.

Somebody has to feed all those tango dancers.

Gregory Denton and his wife, Gabrielle Quinónez Denton, recently opened Ox, their Argentine-inspired Northeast Portland restaurant. Gabrielle, whose family hails from Ecuador, grew up in L.A. but spent childhood summers with her grandmother making empanadas and frying the dough-wrapped morsels in oil. At Ox, she gives the deep-fried appetizers an Argentine twist by offering a traditional meat filling (complete with green olive and hard-boiled egg), and often pairs it with another more exotic filling.

Those have included a version made with grilled corn, poblano chile peppers, potato and fontina cheese; another combination was foie gras with maple-glazed heirloom carrots; and a third was made with sunchoke, black truffle, broccoli and fontina cheese.

"An empanada is basically a Hot Pocket, and you choose your filling and go with it," she says.

Buenos Aires native Carlos Lopez El Mankabadi fashions vegetarian empanadas by hand for customers of Niche, a wine bar in downtown Vancouver. Although he and his family moved to Tucson, Ariz., when he was 5, they kept up the tradition of family bake-athons, producing 100 empanadas or more at a time. At Niche, he rolls out lard-free dough in 5-inch disks and hand-fills about 30 empanadas at a time, crimping the edges to make the distinctive *repulgue* (the decorative pattern that varies for each filling), brushing the pastry with an egg wash and baking small batches in the convection oven behind the bar.

Lopez El Mankabadi replaces meat with mushrooms in what is the traditional empanada filling, made with sliced green olives and hard-cooked egg. And he recently offered two other tasty vegetarian fillings: kale, garlic and Peppadew peppers, and mashed potato with spinach and Italian truffle oil. Because he's not a vegetarian himself, Lopez El Mankabadi gets his meat fix at Argentina PDX, a popular food cart at Northeast 22nd Avenue and Alberta Street that serves authentic Mendoza-style empanadas with both meat

and spinach fillings.

Sweet cooked raisins pop up in some versions of the traditional Argentine beef filling, which Lopez El Mankabadi cannot abide. My other empanada mentor, Laura Catena, also turns up her nose at raisins.

I met Catena in Mendoza, where she lives part of the year, running her family's prominent winery, Catena Zapata. She has a home, husband and three children in San Francisco, where she's an emergency room physician. And in her spare time, she wrote "Vino Argentino: An Insider's Guide to the Wines and Wine Country of Argentina."

Her book includes a recipe for Empanadas Salteñas, or beef empanadas from the northern province of Salta. The recipe includes raisins and cumin, which she says are typical Salta additions to the traditional meat filling, although personally she prefers the empanadas without raisins.

"You divide Argentines according to whether they like raisins or not, just as you divide them by what soccer teams they like," she said. "My personal favorite is Roquefort cheese and onion. To me it's sublime. Also goat cheese, onion and spinach in a Greek style. That is fantastic."

Fillings are apparently limited only by the cook's imagination, by the farmer's market offerings for that week, or even by leftovers sitting in the refrigerator. Just about anything goes, as long as the filling is thick enough not to seep between the edges of the pastry.

Catena said that in Argentina most pizzerias double as empanada shops, offering a dozen or more varieties, each with a distinctive *repulgue*. Order cards are common on which the customer jots the number of empanadas desired in boxes next to drawings of empanadas and their particular *repulgue*.

When entertaining at home, Argentines offer empanadas and wine to dinner guests as they arrive. But night owls might nibble empanadas and drink wine for hours before being summoned to the dinner table, says Catena.

That's how I got my start, standing next to an outdoor clay oven after twilight in Mendoza, sipping wine and eagerly awaiting the next batches of golden empanadas to finish baking. When we were finally called in to dinner, I was sorry to go.

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Susan G. Hauser is a Portland freelance writer and past president of Portland Culinary Alliance.

## Pastry-type Empanada Dough

Makes about 12 (5-inch) disks

- 2¼ cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- ½ cup cold unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch cubes (1 stick)
- 1 egg
- ⅓ cup ice water
- 1 tablespoon distilled white vinegar

Into a large bowl, sift flour with salt and blend in butter with your fingertips or a pastry blender until mixture resembles coarse meal with some pea-size pieces of butter. (This step can also be done in a food processor using the pulse button.)

In a small bowl, beat together the egg, ice water and vinegar with a fork. Add to flour mixture, stirring with fork until just incorporated into a shaggy mixture. (If using a food processor, add egg mixture and pulse just until combined; do not overprocess.)

Turn out mixture onto a lightly floured surface and gather together, then knead gently with heel of your hand once or twice, just enough to bring dough together. Form dough into a flat rectangle and chill, wrapped in plastic wrap, at least 1 hour before rolling.

Divide dough into 12 pieces and use a rolling pin to roll each into a 5-inch-diameter, ⅛-inch-thick circle. As you roll pieces of dough, keep unrolled pieces covered. Fill and bake as directed.

—Adapted from *Gourmet magazine*, October 2004

## Yeasted Empanada Dough

Makes about 10 (5-inch) disks

I like to use this yeasted dough for savory handpies, empanadas and turnovers. It's made with olive oil and an egg, which makes the dough extra sturdy and supple. Be sure to roll the dough thin enough or the handpies will be breadly.

—Ellen Jackson

- ½ cup tepid water
- 2 teaspoons instant dry yeast
- 1 teaspoon granulated sugar
- 1 egg
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1¼ teaspoons salt
- 1¾ to 2 cups all-purpose flour

Put the water in a medium-size bowl and sprinkle yeast and sugar on top. Let stand until bubbly, 10 to 12 minutes. Beat egg and add it to the yeast mixture along with the olive oil and salt; whisk until smooth.

Add about 1¾ cups flour and stir with a wooden spoon. Continue to add remaining flour until the dough is too stiff to stir with a spoon. Turn the dough onto a work surface and knead it until it's smooth and elastic, about 3 minutes. If the dough sticks, add more flour sparingly.

Put the dough in a bowl with a light coating of olive oil, turn it over to coat, cover and let rise until double in size, about 45 minutes depending on the temperature of the room.

Turn the dough out of the bowl and divide into 10 equal pieces. Shape the pieces into balls, cover and let rest 15 minutes before rolling out.

Lightly coat a work surface with flour and flatten a dough ball so that it keeps its shape. Use a rolling pin to roll it into a 5-inch-diameter, ⅛-inch-thick circle. Repeat with remaining dough balls. Fill and bake as directed.

—From Ellen Jackson

## Picadillo Empanadas

Makes about 3 cups filling, for about 12 pastries made with 5-inch dough disks

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 pound beef chuck, cut into ½-inch cubes
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced (1 tablespoon)
- 1 large green bell pepper, seeded and finely chopped
- 1 serrano or jalapeño chile, seeded and finely chopped
- 1 cup tomato sauce
- ¼ cup raisins
- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- ⅓ cup pimento-stuffed green olives, chopped
- Cayenne pepper
- Empanada dough disks, homemade or store-bought
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon water

Heat oil in a large skillet and brown beef well, a third at a time. Remove meat from pan as browned and season with salt and black pepper to taste. In the same pan, sauté onion, garlic, bell pepper and chile until soft, about 5 minutes. Return meat and any juices to the pan.

Add tomato sauce, raisins, vinegar, olives and cayenne to taste; bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until the meat is very tender, 30 to 45 minutes. Cool to room temperature.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Place filling on half of each dough disk, leaving a ½-inch border (a 5-inch disk can hold about 3 tablespoons). Lightly moisten edge of dough with water; fold top half over filling. Press edges together to seal, then crimp with your fingers or tines of a fork. In a small bowl, beat egg with 1 tablespoon water and brush mixture on empanadas. Bake until golden, 25 to 30 minutes. Let cool slightly before serving.

## Pork Empanadas With Thyme

Makes about 2 cups filling; for about 10 pastries made with 5-inch dough disks

- ½ medium Yukon Gold potato, peeled and diced medium
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ small yellow onion, diced small
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 8 ounces ground pork
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves, plus small sprigs for topping
- 1½ teaspoons chopped fresh sage
- 2 teaspoons all-purpose flour, plus more for working
- 2 tablespoons golden raisins (optional)
- 3 tablespoons water (divided)
- 2 tablespoons toasted pine nuts (optional; see note)
- 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
- Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Empanada dough disks, homemade or store-bought (see note)
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon water

Set a steamer basket in a pot with 2 inches boiling water. Add potato, cover and cook until tender, about 10 to 15 minutes. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add onion and garlic; cook, stirring occasionally, until onion softens, about 5 to 7 minutes. Raise heat to high and add pork, thyme and sage; cook, breaking up meat with a spoon, until pork is no longer pink, about 4 minutes. Add flour; cook, stirring, until blended, about 30 seconds. Add raisins, if using, and 2 tablespoons of the water; cook until thickened, about 1 minute. Remove from heat and stir in potato, pine nuts, if using, and vinegar. Season filling with salt and pepper and let cool.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Place filling on half of each dough disk, leaving a ½-inch border (a 5-inch disk can hold about 3 tablespoons). Lightly moisten edge of dough with water; fold top half over filling. Press edges together to seal, then crimp with your fingers or tines of a fork. Transfer empanadas to baking sheet lined with parchment. In a small bowl, beat egg with 1 tablespoon water and brush mixture on empanadas and top with thyme sprigs. Bake until golden, 25 to 30 minutes. Let cool slightly before serving.

**Note:** To toast pine nuts, spread on baking sheet and bake in a preheated 350-degree oven for 3 to 5 minutes. Check after 3 minutes. They go from browned to burned in a matter of seconds.

## Corn and Roasted Pepper Empanadas (Empanadas de Humitas)

Makes about 3 cups filling, for about 12 pastries made with 5-inch dough disks

- 1½ tablespoons olive oil
- ½ medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 pound frozen corn kernels or 2½ to 3 cups fresh kernels cut from the cob
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- ¼ cup whipping cream
- ½ teaspoon salt, or more to taste
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes, or to taste
- ½ cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- ¼ cup diced roasted red bell pepper (jarred is fine)
- Empanada dough disks, homemade or store-bought
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons water

In a medium saucepan, heat the oil over medium-high. Add the onion and sauté until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the corn and heat through, 5 to 7 minutes. Mix the cornstarch into the whipping cream and add the mixture to the corn and onion, stirring to combine. Add the salt, crushed pepper flakes and cheese. Taste and adjust seasoning as needed. Stir until slightly thickened and cheese has melted. Remove from heat and blend one-third of the mixture in a blender or food processor. Return the puréed portion to the remaining corn mixture. Fold in the roasted bell pepper and let cool completely, first on the stovetop and then in the refrigerator (this helps the mixture thicken and firm up).

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Lightly dust a baking sheet with flour.

Place filling on half of each dough disk, leaving a ½-inch border (a 5-inch disk can hold about 3 tablespoons). Lightly moisten edge of dough with water; fold top half over filling. Use the palms of the hands to gently pack the filling firmly in the center. Press edges together to seal, then crimp with your fingers or tines of a fork. Place the finished empanadas on the baking sheet, then gently put a few holes in the top of the empanada to release the heat and prevent the empanada filling from popping out. In a small bowl, beat egg with 2 tablespoons water and brush mixture on empanadas. Bake until golden, about 20 minutes. Let cool slightly before serving.

—Adapted from Rebecca Caro's blog, *From Argentina With Love*, from *argentinawithlove.typepad.com*

## Finding store-bought empanada dough

La Salteña frozen *tapas*, or empanada dough disks, are made in Argentina, cost about \$3.25 at Latino or international markets and come in blue packages of 12 (4½-inch disks) for baking or red for frying. Foodday tested the baking variety, and while they are convenient, they are not nearly as tender, flaky and flavorful as homemade dough. Vegetarians should note that the dough is made with beef fat.

## Empanada wine tips

"I think there's an empanada for every wine," says Laura Catena, president of Argentina's Bodega Catena Zapata. "For the traditional meat empanada, the best wine would be a malbec, a cabernet sauvignon or syrah. If there are raisins in it, I would pair it with a malbec from a lower altitude with a ripe flavor, or a syrah. But the pastry is pretty rich and tastes good with a white wine, so an interesting combination is with chardonnay. I would have the *humita* (corn) with torrentés and Roquefort-onion with chardonnay. Ham and cheese empanadas, which are very popular in Argentina, go fine with any wine."

the original Social Network

Flavor of the month

**BEAVER TRACKS**

**DUCK TRACKS**

Chocolate-coated caramel footballs collide with a thick band of chocolate fudge in a mild peanut butter flavored ice cream.

## WINE EVENTS

For expanded listings, visit foodday.com and search by event type.

### EVENTS

**Willamette Valley Wine Essentials Class:** The casual, interactive class provides general education on the region. Light appetizers provided. Ages 21 and older. 5:30-7:30 p.m. Fri. Anam Cara Cellars, 306 N. Main St., Newberg; www.freespiritwines.com/ classes or 503-308-9463; \$40 per class; registration required.

**Chehalem Valley Food, Wine and Art Festival:** Features food, wine, beer and art. Benefits the Chehalem Valley Chamber of Commerce and Oregon Special Olympics. VIP admission begins 11 a.m. Sat, Sept. 8; general admission noon; event ends 6 p.m. Oakhurst Farm, 18715 N.E. Highway 240, Newberg; www.Chehalem-FoodWineAndArt.com or 503-538-2014; \$30 general, \$50 VIP.

**Harvest Festival:** 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Sun, Sept. 9. Rogue Ales offers games, entertainment, Chatoe Rogue Tasting Room and Chuck Wagon Food Cart offering food and beverage for purchases, plus local vendors. Farm tour 3 p.m. Traditional salmon bake \$20; order tickets by phone. Rogue Farms Hopyard, 3590 Wigrich Road, Independence; www.rogue.com/

store or 503-838-9813; free admission; refreshment prices vary.

**Vino Basics – Wine 101:** 2-4 p.m. Sun, Sept. 9. Mich Nelson offers an introduction to the world of wine. Includes light appetizers. Register by phone or email to orders@hipchicksdowine.com. Hip Chicks Do Wine, 4510 S.E. 23rd Ave.; www.hipchicksdowine.com or 503-234-3790; \$40 individual, \$70 for two; registration required.

### TASTINGS

**Rhone Wine:** Noon-7 p.m. Wed-Sat, Sept. 5-8. Flight of five wines and a cheese plate. Urban Wine Works, 1315 N.E. Fremont St.; www.urbanwineworks.com or 503-493-1366; \$15.

**Last of the Summer Wine: Sparling and Rose:** 5:30-10 p.m. Wed, Sept. 5. Paley's Place, 1204 N.W. 21st Ave.; www.paleysplace.net or 503-243-2403; three individually priced flights.

**Terra Bianca Wines:** 4:30-8 p.m. Fri, Sept. 7. Casual tasting with six-eight wines; includes appetizers. Special guest Tim Shimmel pours. World Class Wines, 269 A. Ave., Lake Oswego; www.worldclasswineregion.com or 503-974-9841; \$10, with optional \$5 bonus pours.

**Reds of Southern Italy and Sicily:** 5-7:30 p.m. Fri, Sept. 7. Great Wine Buys, 1515 N.E. Broadway; www.greatwinebuys.com or 503-

287-2897; \$15.

**Totally Random Wine Tasting:** 5-9 p.m. Fri, Sept. 7. Allegri Wine Shop, 44 N. Main Ave., Gresham; 503-465-1841; \$12.

**A Slew of Super Tuscans:** 5:30-7:30 p.m. Fri, Sept. 7. Liner & Elsen Wines, 2222 N.W. Quimby St.; www.linerandelsen.com or 503-241-9463; tasting fee.

**Saturday Tasting:** Noon-5 p.m. Sat, Sept. 8. Wines from Italy, Liner & Elsen Wines, 2222 N.W. Quimby St.; www.linerandelsen.com or 503-241-9463; free.

**Wines From Italy:** 1-4 p.m. Sat, Sept. 8. The Cellar on 10th, 1004 Marine Drive, Astoria; www.thecellaron10th.com or 503-325-6600; tasting fee.

**Piedmont Nebbiolo:** 2-5 p.m. Sat, Sept. 8. Great Wine Buys, 1515 N.E. Broadway; www.greatwinebuys.com or 503-287-2897; free.

**Winemaker's Signature Tasting:** 2-3 p.m. Sun, Sept. 9. Winemaker Mark Proden talks about current wines, their origins and inspiration, then discusses a viticulture or enology topic to explain how wine is made from growing to bottling, sales and marketing. Limited to seven people; register by the Friday prior to event. Island Mana Wines, 526 S.W. Yamhill St.; www.islandmanawines.com or 971-229-1040; \$25, including tastings and glass; registration required.