La gougère

Cheese pastry

I first tasted this cheese pastry in a cellar in Burgundy. It was served cold. I had been visiting vineyards and tasting wines which was quite an experience as I was a novice at the time and had emptied every glass I was offered. The rich cheese flavoured pastry was most welcome and an excellent complement to the red wines of Burgundy.

It can be served in many different ways: as a crown which is the most usual, or like small profiteroles or mini rolls, cut into bite-size pieces.

- 1½ oz (45 g) melted butter
- ¾ cup (180 ml) water
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- freshly ground pepper
- 2½ oz (75 g) plain flour
- 4 oz (120 g) Swiss cheese
- 2 x 60 g eggs

Sift the flour and cut the cheese into very small dice. Put the water, butter, salt and pepper into a saucepan and bring to the boil. Add the sifted flour all at once, stirring constantly. Beat the mixture with a wooden spoon until it is smooth and thick and it comes away from the sides of the pan. Remove the pan from the heat and add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition.[1] Continue to stir until it is completely incorporated. When it is smooth and shiny add the cubes of cheese.

Grease an oven tray with unsalted butter and dust with flour. Mark a small circle on the tray with an entrée plate about 18 cm (7 in) diameter. Tablespoon small amounts of pastry around the outside edge of the circle to form a crown.

Bake in a 350ºF / 175ºC oven for about an hour or until it is well browned. Remove from the oven and prick with a darning needle in several places to allow the steam to escape. It can be served as an entrée filled with spinach, mushrooms, etc.

Serves 6

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[1] If using a heavy saucepan, make sure it's cooled sufficiently not to start cooking the egg white when you add that 1st egg.