

Diamond Vol au Vents (Puff Pastry Shell)

It's high brow meets low brow. If you're a fan of soup in a bread bowl, you'll dig this throwback fancy diamond-shaped puff pastry vessel filled with any kind of stew for a savory application, or filled with sweet, macerated fruit and topped with whipped cream. It's a fun thing to make to impress your friends, your boss or, well, anyone.

Use one of your favorite store-bought stews for the filling, or even better, try one of ours. (See our Beef Stew, Vegetable Curry Stew, or Skillet Chicken Pot Pie stew).

Ingredients

All-purpose flour (for dusting)

1 (14-ounce) sheet frozen puff pastry, thawed according to package instructions

1 egg, lightly beaten

to serve

4 to 6 cups thick stew (store-bought or homemade), heated

1 tablespoon finely chopped chives

special equipment

pastry brush, rolling pin

Directions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment and sprinkle lightly with flour.

Dust a clean work surface with flour. Gently unfold the puff pastry on the surface and roll it out with a lightly floured rolling pin until it's a little larger than a 14-inch square (to allow for trimming the edges). Cut into 4 equal squares, about 7 inches each, trimming any ragged edges.

Working with one square at a time, fold the square in half diagonally to form a triangle. Set it in front of you with the pointy edge facing away from you. Using a sharp knife or pizza wheel, cut a 1/2-inch border along each of the short sides of the triangle, stopping about a quarter-inch before the cuts intersect at the tip. Transfer the triangle to one of the parchment-lined baking sheets with the intact tip facing away from you.

Carefully open the triangle into a diamond. Two of the corners of the inner diamond will be attached to the outer border and the other two corners will be free. Use a fork to dock the inner diamond that's been created, and brush the inner diamond with egg wash. (Docking the inner diamond will keep that section from rising as much as the sides.)

Gently lift one of the free corners of the **outer** diamond. Fold it over and line up its edges to the edge of the opposite corner of the **inner** diamond. Press down on the inner diamond border to seal. Repeat with the other side. You should still have a diamond shape that now has 2 fancy twisted tips. Brush the borders with egg wash. Repeat with the remaining squares. (You may need to use 2 baking pans to fit all four diamonds.) Chill in the freezer for 5 to 10 minutes.

Bake, rotating the pans halfway through, until the pastry is puffed up -- deep, golden brown -- and cooked through, 22 to 25 minutes. Transfer the pans to a wire rack to let the pastries cool completely.

to serve

If you'd like to have puff pastry lids to cover the vol au vents, carefully score the edges of the inner diamonds and lift the inner diamonds off. Set aside. Otherwise, press the inner diamond down into the bottom.

Put the vol au vents on 4 individual plates. Fill each with 1 to 1½ cups of the hot stew and sprinkle with chopped chives. Top with the puff pastry lids, if using, and serve.

Cook's Note

When brushing the pastry with egg wash, don't let it drip down the sides of the pastry onto the baking tray. The egg will glue the layers of the pastry together, and it won't rise as high.

total time: 50 minutes

active prep: 20 minutes

serves: 4

difficulty: *easy*