

Pierogi – Comfort du Jour

These delectable Polish dumplings have been on my culinary bucket list too long! If you've made fresh pasta dough before, this will be a snap for you. If you haven't, this is a good place to start because the dough is easier to work and the results were so delicious and comforting!

DOUGH INGREDIENTS (ADAPTED FROM *THE GEFILTE MANIFESTO*)

1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup spelt flour
1 1/2 tsp kosher salt
2 eggs
3 Tbsp. warm water

Mix all ingredients together in a stand mixer or by hand with a heavy spoon. Knead only enough to make a soft, sticky dough. Wrap in plastic and set aside to rest while you make the filling.

FILLING INGREDIENTS

4 medium Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and boiled until fork-tender
1 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
1 leek, white and light green parts, split lengthwise and sliced thin
2 handfuls fresh baby spinach, chopped into small pieces (stems are OK)
1/3 cup small curd cottage cheese
1/2 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
2 oz. finely shredded white cheddar cheese

1. Drain potatoes, transfer them to a mixing bowl and mash with a fork.
2. Sauté leeks in olive oil, season with salt and pepper and cook until soft and caramelized. Add leeks to the potatoes.
3. In the same pan, saute the spinach until fully wilted. Add to the potato mixture.
4. Mash together the potato mixture with cottage cheese and nutmeg, then cool slightly before blending in the shredded cheddar.
5. Cover and chill filling mixture while you shape the pierogi dough.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

1. Cut pierogi dough in half, and rewrap one piece. On a lightly floured counter, roll out the first piece of dough to 1/8" thickness. If dough is difficult to roll, cover with a clean towel or plastic wrap and let it rest 15 minutes before proceeding.
2. Use a biscuit cutter or round glass (about 3 1/2") to cut dough into circles. Try to cut circles close together to make the most of the dough.
3. Spoon about 1 1/2 teaspoons of filling mixture onto the center of each dough round. Dip your finger into cold water and wet one round edge of the dough to help with sealing the pierogi.

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4. Cup a dough round in one palm, and used your other hand to seal the edges tight, stretching the dough as needed to fully envelop the filling. Lightly wet dough edges again if needed for sealing.
5. Once the rounds are sealed up into half-moon shapes, crimp the edges with a floured fork and let them rest while the water comes to boil.

BOILING AND PAN-FRYING

1. Bring a large pot of water to a gentle boil. Salt it generously.
2. Carefully dip pierogi into the water (one at a time and only enough to cook without crowding). They will sink to the bottom initially but will begin to float after a few minutes. Allow them to boil gently for about four minutes from the time they begin to float. Gently turn them over after a couple minutes for more even cooking.
3. Use a strainer or large slotted spoon to scoop them out onto a parchment-lined sheet pan.
4. Continue with remaining pierogi until you have boiled the amount you intend to cook for your meal. The rest can be frozen for later (see notes at end).

For optional frying in skillet (which I highly recommend), melt 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter in a large skillet over medium low heat. Add pierogi to butter and sauté until browned to your liking. Sprinkle in fresh thyme or chopped sage leaves for extra pizzazz. Serve pierogi and spoon remaining browned butter over the top.

FREEZING THE LEFTOVERS

This half-batch of pierogi made four servings, and I ended up with enough leftover to freeze for later. I laid the (un-boiled) individual dumplings out on a parchment-lined sheet, covered loosely with another sheet of parchment and froze overnight, then I transferred them to a zip top bag for cooking later.

To cook frozen pierogi, place them into boiling water (from frozen) and simmer gently for 4 or 5 minutes from the time they float in the water. Cook only enough at once to keep from crowding in the pan.