



Homemade Christmas Mince Pies

Christmas mincemeat

Home-made mincemeat is dead simple to make. Having said that in the past people used to have trouble storing it. This was because the high percentage of apples oozed too much juice and the juice started to ferment. In the following recipe the mincemeat is placed in a barely warm oven and so the suet gradually melts and as this happens it coats all the fruits, including the apples, sealing in the juices. Vegetarians can make this mincemeat happily, using vegetarian suet.

- 8oz (225g) bramley apples, cored and chopped small (no need to peel them)
- 4oz (110g) shredded suet
- 6oz (175g) raisins
- 4oz (110g) sultanas
- 4oz (110g) currants
- 4oz (110g) whole mixed candied peel, finely chopped
- 6oz (175g) soft dark brown sugar
- grated zest and juice of two oranges
- grated zest and juice of two lemons
- 1oz (25g) whole almonds, cut into slivers
- 2tsp mixed ground spice
- ¼ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp nutmeg
- 3tbsp brandy

You will also need 3 x 0.5 litre jars

Method

Combine all the ingredients, except for the brandy, in a large mixing bowl, stirring them and mixing them together very thoroughly indeed. Then cover the bowl with a clean cloth and leave the mixture in a cool place overnight or for 12 hours, so the flavours have a chance to mingle and develop. Pre-heat the oven to gas mark $\frac{1}{4}$, 225°F (120°C). Cover the bowl loosely with foil and place it in the oven for 3 hours. Remove the bowl from the oven and don't worry about the appearance of the mincemeat, which will look positively swimming in fat. This is how it should look! As it cools stir from time to time; the fat will coagulate and instead of it being in tiny shreds it will encase all the other ingredients. When the mincemeat is quite cold then stir in the brandy. Pack in jars that have been washed, dried and placed in a moderate oven for 5 minutes, cover with waxed discs and seal. The mincemeat will keep in a cool, dark cupboard indefinitely, but I think it is best eaten within a year of making.

Pastry for Mince Pies

Ingredients

- 170g butter
- 350g flour
- 25ml milk

Method

Place the butter and flour into a food processor. Blitz until breadcrumb stage and then add the milk. Remove from the food processor and roll into a ball, cover with cling film and place into the fridge for 30 minutes.

Making Your Mince Pies

Method

Divide the pastry into two on a well floured work surface. How many mince pies depends on how thick or thin you like your pastry. Once rolled cut your pastry slightly larger for the bases and the same size for the tops. Place all of your bottoms in your desired tray and put 1 tablespoon of mincemeat in each one. Once they are all filled moisten the edges with a little milk and then place the tops on - making sure they are nice and secure. At this stage you can either freeze them or bake them off. When you come to bake them brush with a little milk and sugar and bake at 200°C for 20 minutes.