

Lobster Vols-au-Vent

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puff pastry from Michel Richard in Baking With Julia by Dorie Greenspan

1/3 puff pastry recipe (see below), well-chilled
egg wash (1 egg or yolk beaten with a small amount of water)
1 lb. lobster tails
2 tbsps butter
2 large shallots, minced
1/2 cup white wine (Chardonnay)
1/2 cup heavy cream
2 egg yolks
salt and pepper to taste

Assemble the vols-au-vent: 1/3 of the puff pastry recipe below will yield about 8-10 1.5" vols-au-vent or 4 4" vols-au-vent. Line a baking sheet with parchment and set aside. Using a knife or metal bench scraper, divided your chilled puff pastry dough into three equal pieces. Work with one piece of the dough, and leave the rest wrapped and chilled. On a lightly floured surface, roll the piece of dough into a rectangle about 1/8 to 1/4-inch (3-6 mm) thick. Transfer it to the baking sheet and refrigerate for about 10 minutes before proceeding with the cutting. (This assumes you will be using round cutters, but if you do not have them, it is possible to cut square vols-au-vents using a sharp chef's knife.) For smaller, hors d'oeuvre sized vols-au-vent, use a 1.5" round cutter to cut out 8-10 circles. For larger sized vols-au-vent, fit for a main course or dessert, use a 4" cutter to cut out about 4 circles. Make clean, sharp cuts and try not to twist your cutters back and forth or drag your knife through the dough. Half of these rounds will be for the bases, and the other half will be for the sides. (Save any scrap by stacking—not wadding up—the pieces...they can be re-rolled and used if you need extra dough. If you do need to re-roll scrap to get enough disks, be sure to use any rounds cut from it for the bases, not the ring-shaped sides.) Using a 3/4-inch cutter for small vols-au-vent, or a 2- to 2.5-inch round cutter for large, cut centers from half of the rounds to make rings. These rings will become the sides of the vols-au-vent, while the solid disks will be the bottoms. You can either save the center cut-outs to bake off as little "caps" for you vols-au-vent, or put them in the scrap pile.

Dock the solid bottom rounds with a fork (prick them lightly, making sure not to go all the way through the pastry) and lightly brush them with egg wash. Place the rings directly on top of the bottom rounds and very lightly press them to adhere. Brush the top rings lightly with egg wash, trying not to drip any down the sides (which may inhibit rise). If you are using the little "caps," dock and egg wash them as well. Refrigerate the assembled vols-au-vent on the lined baking sheet while you pre-heat the oven to 400°F (200°C). (You could also cover and refrigerate them for a few hours at this point.) Once the oven is heated, remove the sheet from the refrigerator and place a silicon baking mat (preferred because of its weight) or another sheet of parchment over top of the shells. This will help them rise evenly. Bake the shells until they have risen and begin to

brown, about 10-15 minutes depending on their size. Reduce the oven temperature to 350°F (180°C), and remove the silicon mat or parchment sheet from the top of the vols-au-vent. If the centers have risen up inside the vols-au-vent, you can gently press them down. Continue baking (with no sheet on top) until the layers are golden, about 15-20 minutes more. (If you are baking the center “caps” they will likely be finished well ahead of the shells, so keep an eye on them and remove them from the oven when browned.) Remove to a rack to cool. Cool to room temperature for cold fillings or to warm for hot fillings.

Notes: For additional rise on the larger-sized vols-au-vents, you can stack one or two additional ring layers on top of each other (using egg wash to “glue”). This will give higher sides to larger vols-au-vents, but is not advisable for the smaller ones, whose bases may not be large enough to support the extra weight. Although they are at their best filled and eaten soon after baking, baked vols-au-vent shells can be stored airtight for a day. Shaped, unbaked vols-au-vent can be wrapped and frozen for up to a month (bake from frozen, egg-washing them first).

Make the filling: Bring enough water to a boil in a saucepan that will fit the lobster(s). When the water is boiling, place lobster(s) in the water for a minute. Remove the lobsters and cut the shell open to remove the meat. Save the shells for bisque. Cut the meat into bite-sized pieces. Set aside. Heat butter in a small to medium saucepan until melted. Increase flame to medium high and sauté the shallots until they become translucent. Add the lobster meat and the wine and let simmer for a minute. Pour in the cream and heat until steaming. Remove the pan from heat and whisk two egg yolks in quickly (to avoid curdling). When incorporated into the cream, return to heat over medium flame and stir constantly with a spatula until the sauce thickens and coats the back of the spatula. Add salt and pepper to taste. Fill the pastries and serve. Makes 4 lobster vols-au-vent. An excellent garnish is to sauté alba clamshell mushrooms in butter with a pinch of salt.

puff pastry dough

2 1/2 cups (12.2 oz/354g) unbleached all-purpose flour
1 1/4 cups (5.0 oz/142g) cake flour
1 tbsp salt (you can cut this by half for a less salty dough or for sweet preparations)
1 1/4 cups (10 fl oz/300 ml) ice water
1 pound (16 oz/454g) very cold unsalted butter
extra flour for dusting work surface

Mixing the Dough: Check the capacity of your food processor before you start. If it cannot hold the full quantity of ingredients, make the dough into two batches and combine them. Put the all-purpose flour, cake flour, and salt in the work bowl of a food processor fitted with a metal blade and pulse a couple of times just to mix. Add the water all at once, pulsing until the dough forms a ball on the blade. The dough will be very moist and pliable and will hold together when squeezed between your fingers. Actually, it will feel like Play-Doh. Remove the dough from the machine, form it into a ball, with a small sharp knife, slash the top in a tic-tac-toe pattern. Wrap the dough in a

damp towel and refrigerate for about 5 minutes. Meanwhile, place the butter between 2 sheets of plastic wrap and beat it with a rolling pin until it flattens into a square that's about 1" thick. Take care that the butter remains cool and firm: if it has softened or become oily, chill it before continuing.

Incorporating the Butter: Unwrap the dough and place it on a work surface dusted with all-purpose flour (A cool piece of marble is the ideal surface for puff pastry) with your rolling pin (preferably a French rolling pin without handles), press on the dough to flatten it and then roll it into a 10" square. Keep the top and bottom of the dough well floured to prevent sticking and lift the dough and move it around frequently. Starting from the center of the square, roll out over each corner to create a thick center pad with "ears," or flaps. Place the cold butter in the middle of the dough and fold the ears over the butter, stretching them as needed so that they overlap slightly and encase the butter completely. (If you have to stretch the dough, stretch it from all over; don't just pull the ends) you should now have a package that is 8" square. To make great puff pastry, it is important to keep the dough cold at all times. There are specified times for chilling the dough, but if your room is warm, or you work slowly, or you find that for no particular reason the butter starts to ooze out of the pastry, cover the dough with plastic wrap and refrigerate it. You can stop at any point in the process and continue at your convenience or when the dough is properly chilled.

Making the Turns: Gently but firmly press the rolling pin against the top and bottom edges of the square (this will help keep it square). Then, keeping the work surface and the top of the dough well floured to prevent sticking, roll the dough into a rectangle that is three times as long as the square you started with, about 24" (don't worry about the width of the rectangle: if you get the 24", everything else will work itself out.) With this first roll, it is particularly important that the butter be rolled evenly along the length and width of the rectangle; check when you start rolling that the butter is moving along well, and roll a bit harder or more evenly, if necessary, to get a smooth, even dough-butter sandwich (use your arm-strength!). With a pastry brush, brush off the excess flour from the top of the dough, and fold the rectangle up from the bottom and down from the top in thirds, like a business letter, brushing off the excess flour. You have completed one turn. Rotate the dough so that the closed fold is to your left, like the spine of a book. Repeat the rolling and folding process, rolling the dough to a length of 24" and then folding it in thirds. This is the second turn.

Chilling the Dough: If the dough is still cool and no butter is oozing out, you can give the dough another two turns now. If the condition of the dough is iffy, wrap it in plastic wrap and refrigerate it for at least 30 minutes. Each time you refrigerate the dough, mark the number of turns you've completed by indenting the dough with your fingertips. It is best to refrigerate the dough for 30 to 60 minutes between each set of two turns. The total number of turns needed is six. If you prefer, you can give the dough just four turns now, chill it overnight, and do the last two turns the next day. Puff pastry is extremely flexible in this regard. However, no matter how you arrange your schedule, you should plan to chill the dough for at least an hour before cutting or shaping it. Makes 2.5 pounds of dough.