



Chestnut and Squash crackers

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 250g butternut squash (about half a medium squash), peeled, deseeded, and cut into 1cm cubes
- 250g chestnut mushrooms, chopped
- 100ml Marsala or Madeira wine
- 100g cooked chestnuts, chopped
- 1 tsp dried sage or a few fresh sage leaves, finely chopped
- 2 prunes, pitted and finely chopped
- 2 tbsp red onion chutney or relish
- 40g soft white breadcrumbs
- 2 sheets (320g each) ready-rolled puff pastry
- Plain flour, for dusting
- 200g strong hard cheese (such as vegetarian mature cheddar or Emmental), cut into 1cm cubes
- 1 egg, beaten (for glazing)

Instructions

Step 1:

Heat the olive oil and butter in a frying pan over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and butternut squash, cooking gently for about 15 minutes, until the onion is golden and caramelized and the squash is tender. Stir in the mushrooms and cook for another 8–10 minutes until all the moisture has evaporated.

Pour in the Marsala or Madeira wine and let it bubble for 2–3 minutes until the liquid has mostly evaporated. Mix in the chopped chestnuts, sage, prunes, red onion chutney, and breadcrumbs. Season well with salt and pepper. Remove from heat and allow the mixture to cool completely.

Step 2:

Unroll one sheet of puff pastry onto a lightly floured surface. Cut a 2cm-wide strip along one long edge and set this aside for decorating later. Cut the remaining pastry into four long rectangles — these will be the bases for your crackers.

Cut the second pastry sheet into four rectangles to serve as the tops. Place all pastry pieces on a lined baking tray and chill in the fridge for 15 minutes.

Step 3:

Once the filling has cooled, stir in the cubed cheese. Divide the mixture into four equal portions.

Shape each portion into a sausage-like log and place on the pastry bases, leaving plenty of space at each end for the “cracker” edges.

Step 4:

Brush the exposed pastry edges around the filling with beaten egg. Place the pastry tops over the filling and press down to seal all around. Trim any excess pastry and pinch the ends together to form the traditional cracker shape. Use a fork to press the ends for a neat finish. Glaze the entire crackers with more beaten egg.

Use the reserved pastry strips to cut out festive shapes like stars or Christmas trees to decorate the tops, sticking them on with a little egg wash.

Chill the assembled crackers for at least 30 minutes, or up to 24 hours before baking.

Step 5:

Preheat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan)/gas mark 6. Give the crackers a final glaze with beaten egg and bake for 35–40 minutes until puffed up and golden.

Serve warm with vegetarian gravy and plenty of festive sides.