

Pastelão de Frango

From Nelson's Kitchen
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Pastelão de frango (literally big chicken turnover) was a dish that my mother always liked to make when I was growing up. When in college, my friend Horácio and I loved to go back home after class on Friday evenings to drink some beer and have warm-out-of-the-oven pastelão. On a trip to Santiago de Compostela em 2017 I discovered that the origins of this dish is the traditional Empanada Gallega. My recipe is significantly modified from both my mother's and from the empanada Gallega. I like the flakiness of puff pastry. However, if you use the puff pastry both for the bottom and the top layer, the bottom layer will become greasy and unpleasantly soft. For a better texture, I combine traditional American pastry dough in the bottom with the puff pastry on the top.

Ingredients:

- 1 Julia Child's Master Recipe for Puff Pastry from *Mastering the Art of French Cooking - Volume Two* (store-bought puff pastry would also work just fine).
- 1 Julia Child's Master Recipe for Pastry Dough from *The Way to Cook*
- 1 Nelson's Mom's Master Recipe for Chicken Filling
- 1 egg
- Flour for dusting
- Flavorless cooking oil, butter, or cooking spray for the baking sheet
- 1 pinch of salt

Equipment:

- Two Light coloured baking sheet
- Rolling pin
- Dough scraper
- Clean-blade box cutter
- Pastry brush
- Small rotating pizza cutter to trim and cut dough

Procedure:

1. Roll out the bottom pastry:

- Oil the baking sheet and dust it with flour, reserve.
- Roll out the chilled pastry dough until it covers the entire bottom surface of the baking sheet.
- Roll the pastry in the rolling pin and unroll on top of the baking sheet.
- Trim the edges to make sure that only the bottom is covered.
- Using a ruler visually divide the baking sheet into 3 or 4 long strips (each strip should be between 2.5 and 3 inches wide).

2. Spread te filling:

- With a small spoon, spoon 1.0 to 1.5 inch-wide strip of chicken filling along the centre of each strip.
- Put the baking sheet in the refrigerator while you work with the puff pastry.

3. Roll out and cut the top pastry:

- Roll out the chilled puff pastry dough to the same dimension of the baking sheet (you may use a second baking sheet of the same size as a guide). It is easier to roll if you start with a rectangular shape that has the same proportions as the baking sheet. Make sure to use plenty of flour to dust the puff pastry while rolling and lift the pastry from the bench (it will shrink back a bit when you lift). Stop rolling only when the relaxed dough is at the size of the baking sheet.
- If the dough becomes too warm and soft, you can roll it up on your rolling pin and lay it on a parchment-paper-lined baking sheet and put it in the refrigerator until it cools and firms up so that you can continue working.
- When the puff pastry is rolled out, trim the edges to obtain a perfect rectangle.
- Using a ruler divide the pastry into the same number of strips that you divided the filling in the baking sheet with the pastry dough:
 - Make small cuts at both end of the pastry to mark the cuts.
 - Use the edge of the baking sheet as a guide to cut the strips.

4. Lay the top pastry:

- Bring the baking sheet with the pastry dough and chicken filling out of the refrigerator.
- Pour water in a small bowl.
- Using either the tip of your fingers or a pastry brush, brush a 1/2 inch strip of water along both sides of the chicken filling along the first strip.
- Gently fold one of the strips of pastry dough in half. You may fold a second time to make it easier to handle.
- Lift the dough strip and carefully put over one-half or one quart of a strip of chicken filling.
- Unfold the dough strip to cover the entire strip of filling.
- With dry finger, gently press the edges of the puff pastry strip all along both edges of the chicken filling strips.
- Repeat with other strips.
- There should be a narrow strip of uncovered pastry dough between the strips, and perhaps on the outside edges, of each strip of covered chicken filling. Make long straight cuts along the edge of the puff pastry and remove this extra dough so that you have clean edges for each strip. Best is to use a round pizza cutter.
- Cover the baking sheet with plastic wrap and put in the refrigerator for at least one hour (you can refrigerate for up to 24 hours).

5. Bake the Pastries:

- Position a rack in the upper middle part of the oven, and pre-heat the oven to 410 F.
- Beat an egg and a pinch of salt in a small bowl until it is well stirred but not foamy.
- Using a pastry brush, throughly brush the top of each strip of filled pastry with the beaten egg.
- Using the box cutter, make small (up to 1 inch long) evenly spaced cross cuts on the top of the strips. These cuts are where you will slice the strips after they are baked, thus make them for the size of pastries that you want.
- If you decided to make each segment 2 inches or longer, then make a second small diagonal cut on top of each segment.

- Bake in a hot oven (400 F) until the pastry has puffed and has reached a beautiful golden colour (about 40 minutes). For better results, rotate the baking sheet after 25 minutes.
- Let cool for 15 minutes.
- Using a good bread knife, cut along the perpendicular. cuts that you made before baking.
- Put the pastries on a wire rack to cool.
- It can be served warm or cool.