

Gougères

(French Cheese Puffs)

MAKES 3 DOZEN

IN BURGUNDY, where they originated, gougères are considered the perfect hors d'oeuvre. Made from a cheese-flavored pâte à choux (a sticky, pastelike dough that puffs when baked and is also used in making cream puffs, éclairs, and profiteroles), these morsels

are complementary to wine and satisfying to the palate without being filling. The secret to successful gougères—to pâte à choux in general, for that matter—is to add the flour all at once and the eggs one at a time. See page 16 for more tips on perfecting the puff.

8 tbsp. butter, cut into pieces
 ¼ cup milk
 Salt and freshly ground white pepper
 1 cup flour
 4 large eggs, at room temperature
 1½ cups grated comté or gruyère cheese

1. Preheat oven to 400°. Combine butter, ½ cup of the milk, and ½ cup water in a medium saucepan over high heat. Season generously with salt and pepper. Bring to a boil and, when butter has melted, remove pan from heat. Add flour all at once and stir vigorously with a wooden spoon until mixture forms a thick dough and pulls away from the sides of the pan, 1–2 minutes. Return pan to heat and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat.

2. Let dough cool to room temperature, then beat in eggs, one at a time, making sure each egg is completely incorporated into mixture and dough is smooth after each addition. Dough should be thick, glossy, and smooth. Add 1 cup of the cheese and beat in until well combined.

3. Spoon tablespoon-size mounds of dough on nonstick baking sheets, leaving about 1" between them. Brush tops with remaining ¼ cup milk, then sprinkle with remaining ½ cup cheese. Bake one tray at a time in lower third of oven until gougères have doubled in size and are golden, 20–25 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature.