

Apple Strudel

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons (30 ml) golden rum
3 tablespoons (45 ml) raisins
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon (80 g) sugar
1/2 cup (1 stick / 115 g) unsalted butter, melted, divided
1 1/2 cups (350 ml) fresh bread crumbs
strudel dough (recipe below)
1/2 cup (120 ml, about 60 g) coarsely chopped walnuts
2 pounds (900 g) tart cooking apples, peeled, cored and cut into 1/4 inch-thick slices
(use apples that hold their shape during baking)

Instructions:

1. Mix the rum and raisins in a bowl. Mix the cinnamon and sugar in another bowl.
2. Heat 3 tablespoons of the butter in a large skillet over medium-high. Add the breadcrumbs and cook whilst stirring until golden and toasted. This will take about 3 minutes. Let it cool completely.
3. Put the rack in the upper third of the oven and preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a large baking sheet with baking paper (parchment paper). Make the strudel dough as described below. Spread about 3 tablespoons of the remaining melted butter over the dough using your hands (a bristle brush could tear the dough, you could use a special feather pastry brush instead of your hands). Sprinkle the buttered dough with the bread crumbs.

My Notes: *A little tip for spreading the butter – use a pastry brush and sprinkle it over the dough – don't touch the dough it will rip.*

Spread the walnuts about 3 inches (8 cm) from the short edge of the dough in a 6-inch-(15cm)-wide strip. Mix the apples with the raisins (including the rum), and the cinnamon sugar. Spread the mixture over the walnuts.

My Notes: *Make sure the filling is without any liquid. Sometimes if you leave the mixture (apple +cinnamon) for a while, the apple will ooze out liquid. You can also cook the mix over low heat and put some slurry (corn starch and cold water) to it thickening the mix up – but it needs to be cold to be placed on the dough!!*

4. Fold the short end of the dough onto the filling.

Lift the tablecloth at the short end of the dough so that the strudel rolls onto itself.

My Notes: *To make this step easier, it is v essential to flour the tablecloth liberally. Use a dry pastry brush to remove excess flour on the dough during rolling.*

Transfer the strudel to the prepared baking sheet by lifting it.

My Notes: *Use your hands or a wide spatula – if you have done it right it should be in a horseshoe shape. We do it this way so there are not 4 end pieces but if you are more comfortable you certainly can cut the strudel in half to fit it piece by piece.*

Curve it into a horseshoe to fit.

Tuck the ends under the strudel.

Brush the top with the remaining melted butter.

5. Bake the strudel for about 30 minutes or until it is deep golden brown.

My Notes: *Be prepared for moochers cause as soon the strudel bakes you will have your kitchen filled with a beautiful aroma.*

Cool for at least 30 minutes before slicing.

My Notes: *This is actually the hardest part – waiting for 30 minutes – but be warned if you cut it to hot the strudel will break.*

Use a serrated knife and serve either warm or at room temperature. It is best on the day it is baked.

Strudel dough

1 1/3 cups (200 g) unbleached flour

1/8 teaspoon salt

7 tablespoons (105 ml) water, plus more if needed

2 tablespoons (30 ml) vegetable oil, plus additional for coating the dough

1/2 teaspoon cider vinegar

1. Combine the flour and salt in a stand-mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Mix the water, oil and vinegar in a measuring cup. Add the water/oil mixture to the flour with the mixer on low speed. You will get a soft dough. Make sure it is not too dry, add a little more water if necessary.

Take the dough out of the mixer. Change to the dough hook. Put the dough ball back in the mixer. Let the dough knead on medium until you get a soft dough ball with a somewhat rough surface.

2. Take the dough out of the mixer and continue kneading by hand on an unfloured work surface. Knead for about 2 minutes. Pick up the dough and throw it down hard onto your working surface occasionally.

Shape the dough into a ball and transfer it to a plate. Oil the top of the dough ball lightly. Cover the ball tightly with plastic wrap. Allow to stand for 30-90 minutes (longer is better).

My Notes: *As longer the dough sits as easier it will be to work with – but at least let it rest for 2 hours.*

3. It would be best if you have a work area that you can walk around on all sides like a 36 inch (90 cm) round table or a work surface of 23 x 38 inches (60 x 100 cm). Cover your working area with table cloth, dust it with flour and rub it into the fabric. Put your dough ball in the middle

My Notes: *To repeat what I mentioned previously: Flour well and roll it out as much as you can.*

Pick the dough up by holding it by an edge. This way the weight of the dough and gravity can help stretching it as it hangs. Using the back of your hands to gently stretch and pull the dough. You can use your forearms to support it.

4. The dough will become too large to hold. Put it on your work surface. Leave the thicker edge of the dough to hang over the edge of the table. Place your hands underneath the dough and stretch and pull the dough thinner using the backs of your hands. Stretch and pull the dough until it's about 2 feet (60 cm) wide and 3 feet (90 cm) long, it will be tissue-thin by this time.

My Notes: *The rule of thickness – you have to be able to read the news through the dough – good luck ;-)*

Cut away the thick dough around the edges with scissors. The dough is now ready to be filled.

My Notes: *You might not have to cut anything off at all if it is stretched properly.*

Tips

- Ingredients are cheap so we would recommend making a double batch of the dough, that way you can practice the pulling and stretching of the dough with the first batch and if it doesn't come out like it should you can use the second batch to give it another try;
- The tablecloth can be also a half bed sheet (make sure its washed well);
- Before pulling and stretching the dough, remove your jewelry from hands and wrists, and wear short-sleeves AND put your hands in plenty of flour;
- Few small holes in the dough is not a problem as the dough will be rolled, making (most of) the holes invisible.

My Notes: *The great thing about strudel is it is awesome and you can fill it with almost anything – just make sure the filling is not to liquid. I have made strudels with salmon and spinach, potatoes and sausage and plenty of vegetables. Good luck.*