

Game Bird and Wild Mushroom Pierogies

By Tom Healy | Preparation time: 30 minutes | Cooking time: 20 minutes | Serves 4-5



INGREDIENTS

- 1 c. flour (all purpose or pastry)
- ¼ t. salt
- 1 egg, yolk and white divided
- ¼ c. sour cream or crème fraîche
- 2 T. butter (softened) or vegetable oil
- 2 T. water

Add all ingredients except egg white to a medium bowl, mix until combined, then knead into a uniform ball. Wrap tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 20 minutes (or up to three days). Let dough return to room temperature before rolling out.

FILLING

- 8 oz. upland game bird meat or chicken meat, cut into ¼-inch cubes
- 2 T. butter
- ½ c. mushrooms, cut into ¼-inch cubes
- ¼ c. minced shallot or onion
- 1 clove garlic, crushed or minced
- 2 T. white wine

DIRECTIONS

Over medium heat, melt 1 T. butter in a sauté pan and cook the mushrooms, shallot, and garlic for 6 minutes. Add a pinch each of salt and pepper. Add meat and cook 2 minutes. Add wine and stir up the brown bits (fond) from the pan bottom. Reduce the liquid by half. Remove from heat and set aside.

In a large pot, set water to boil. Roll out the dough to ⅛-inch thickness. Using a cup or glass, make 16 to 20 circles, each 3 inches in diameter. Beat egg white with a fork. Brush edges of three discs at a time with egg white, then add scant 1 T. of filling. Fold discs in half and seal with fork tines or fingers. Set aside.

Add the pierogies, 6-7 at a time, to boiling water. Poach 5-6 minutes, then place in a colander for 30 seconds to drain. Pat dry.

Over medium heat, heat 1 T. butter in a non-stick or well-seasoned cast iron pan. Fry 6-7 pierogies at a time, flipping them after 2 minutes until both sides are golden brown. Set on paper towels and pat dry. Sprinkle with salt and serve with shredded parmesan cheese and crème fraîche or sour cream. ■

Pierogies are traditional dumplings of Central European and Baltic origin made by wrapping egg dough around a savory or sweet filling and then boiling or pan-frying (or both) the little parcels. Commonly filled with potatoes, cabbage, ground or cubed meat, cheese, or fruit, pierogies are as delicious to eat as they are fun to prepare. My favorites include pierogies stuffed with venison sausage and herbs, then added to any wild rice soup; pierogies served with crème fraîche and wild onion marmalade; pierogies stuffed with ground venison and cheese and fried in butter (fit for a proper dunking in ketchup); and miniature pastries filled with huckleberries and cream cheese, deep fried and served with ice cream.

As a longtime upland bird hunter and fungus stalker, I've made these Game Bird and Wild Mushroom Pierogies a staple on our household menu. I search for mushrooms in northwestern Montana and hunt for Huns and sharptails in the state's northeastern grasslands. The combination of game birds with wild morel, chanterelle, or shaggy mane mushrooms is delicious. Mountain grouse and pheasants also work fine, as does chicken.

The dough recipe results in durable, "cakey" dumplings when boiled, and tender, flaky parcels when browned.

Tip: Don't waste the dough scraps. They can be combined and rolled again, then stuffed with the bird and mushroom filling, or saved in the refrigerator and stuffed with leftover elk stew (drained), wild raspberry preserves, Nutella and bananas, or other sweet or savory ingredients and then boiled or fried. 🐾

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