




Craquelin Cream Puffs

These cream puffs get dressed up with a cap of sweet and crispy cookie dough (craquelin) on top. While the recipe calls for a filling of whipped cream infused with the bright floral flavor of hibiscus flowers and zesty lime, feel free to go your own route: From store-bought pudding and canned whipped cream to lemon curd, freshly whipped cream, and rhubarb compote, the variations are limited only by your imagination.



 PREP	BAKE	TOTAL	YIELD
50 mins	45 mins	2 hrs 50 mins	16 filled cream puffs

Ingredients

Syrup

- 1 cup + 1 tablespoon (242g) water, divided
- 1/2 cup (85g) granulated sugar
- 5 tea bags hibiscus tea*
- 1 tablespoon (7g) cornstarch

*Substitute 10g food-grade dried hibiscus flowers for the tea bags, if desired.

Craquelin

- 4 tablespoons (57g) unsalted butter, softened
- 1/4 cup + 2 teaspoons (60g) light brown sugar or dark brown sugar, packed
- 1/2 cup (60g) King Arthur Unbleached All-Purpose Flour
- 1/8 teaspoon salt

Pastry

- 1 batch Pâte à Choux

Whipped cream*

- 2 1/2 cups (567g) heavy cream or whipping cream
- 3/4 cup (84g) confectioners' sugar
- 2 to 3 teaspoons (4g to 6g) lime zest (grated rind), from about 2 medium limes

*Enough to fill all 16 puffs; see “tips,” below, to downsize.

Topping

- 2 tea bags hibiscus tea
- 1/3 cup (38g) confectioners' sugar

Instructions

- 1 To make the syrup:** In a small saucepan, combine 1 cup (227g) of the water with the sugar and tea bags. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the syrup comes to a full boil. Once boiling, turn off the heat and allow the tea bags to steep in the syrup for 15 minutes.
- 2** Remove the tea bags, then place the saucepan over medium heat and bring the syrup to a low boil, stirring occasionally. Reduce the volume of liquid by half; this will take approximately 10 minutes.
- 3** In a small bowl, whisk the remaining 1 tablespoon of water with the cornstarch until smooth. Add this mixture to the syrup, whisking constantly over medium heat. The syrup will thicken. Remove from the heat and cool completely. Syrup can be made up to two weeks in advance; refrigerate until ready to use.
- 4 To make the craquelin:** In a large bowl or the bowl of a stand mixer, beat together the butter and sugar until smooth, about 1 to 2 minutes. Add the flour and salt, mixing to make a stiff dough. If the dough doesn't come together use your hands to knead it briefly in the bowl until smooth.
- 5 To shape the craquelin:** Sandwich the dough between two pieces of parchment. Roll it into a rough rectangle about 8" x 9"; it should be about 1/8" thick.
- 6** Using a 2" round cutter cut 12 circles, leaving the rounds and scrap in place on the parchment. Transfer the parchment to a baking sheet and chill the dough in the freezer until fully set, about 10 to 15 minutes. Once set, peel the parchment away from the dough and gently separate the rounds from the scrap; refrigerate the rounds.
- 7** Gather the scrap into a ball and then re-roll it on a piece of parchment until it's about 1/8" thick. Cut four more 2" rounds, leaving them in place. Refrigerate for another 10 to 15 minutes, until set. Separate the rounds from the scrap and chill; you should now have 16 rounds (2" in diameter) in the refrigerator.
- 8** Preheat the oven to 375°F.
- 9 To bake the puffs:** Use a 2-tablespoon scoop (a jumbo cookie scoop is ideal here) or a large spoon to portion the prepared pâte à choux onto two parchment-lined baking sheets in a 3-2-3 pattern (about 35g to 40g per scoop). Alternatively, transfer the pâte à choux to a piping bag fitted with a 1/2" (or larger) round tip and pipe 2" circles of dough roughly 1" in height.
- 10** Center one of the craquelin discs atop each puff.
- 11** Bake the puffs for 20 minutes, then reduce the heat to 325°F and bake for an additional 25 minutes. If there's room in the oven, feel free to bake the craquelin scraps at the same time, until golden; baker's treat!

- ⑫ At the end of baking turn off the oven, crack the door open slightly, and allow the puffs to cool completely in the cooling oven (at least 25 to 30 minutes).
 - ⑬ **To make the whipped cream:** When ready to fill the puffs, add the cream to a large bowl or the bowl of your stand mixer. Use the mixer's whisk (or an electric hand beater) to beat until soft peaks form. Add the confectioners' sugar and lime zest and continue beating until stiff peaks form; be careful not to overbeat. Set aside.
 - ⑭ **To make the topping:** Use a spice grinder, mini food processor, or mortar and pestle to grind the contents of two hibiscus tea bags as finely as possible. In a small bowl, whisk together the confectioners' sugar and ground hibiscus. Set aside.
 - ⑮ **To fill the puffs:** Use a serrated knife to cut each puff in half, separating the top from the bottom. For easiest filling, remove any large pieces of dough from the center of the puff. Spoon or pipe about 2 tablespoons of whipped cream into each half of the puff (both bottom and top halves). Repeat with the remaining puffs.
 - ⑯ Use the back of a spoon to make a small divot in the center of each filled puff half. Add 2 teaspoons of syrup to each divot, then use a chopstick or the handle of a wooden spoon to gently swirl the syrup into the cream, leaving large streaks. Place the halves of each puff back together, aligning the edges.
 - ⑰ **To finish the puffs:** Pipe a small garnish of whipped cream onto the top of each puff, if desired. Use a fine-mesh sieve to generously dust the top of each puff with the hibiscus sugar topping.
 - ⑱ **Storage information:** Filled pastries are best served immediately, or at least the same day; refrigerate until ready to serve. Unfilled puffs may be frozen for up to a month then re-crisped in a 300°F oven for 5 to 10 minutes, or until firm. Allow the puffs to cool before filling.
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Tips from our Bakers

- ☆ If you're unable to find hibiscus tea or flowers but want to try to match hibiscus' floral, fruity flavor, in a pinch you can substitute rose petal jelly or raspberry jam.
- ☆ The filling is best used shortly after it's prepared. Scale down the amount of filling based on the number of puffs you plan to serve immediately (or the same day) — e.g., if only filling eight puffs and freezing the remainder, prepare just a half batch of filling.
- ☆ Use your imagination when garnishing the top of the puff with whipped cream. Try a ruffled line of cream down the center, a rosette or swirl on top, or even a few flourishes made with a star tip — your choice.

In all honesty this is probably not something I'd ever go to the trouble to make, but it sounds really interesting. I wouldn't do hibiscus but I think it might be fun to make an assortment of flavors - raspberry, lime, etc.