

# *Croquembouche Pîeçe Montée*



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## **Croquembouche / Piece Montée Recipe.**

**Yield 20 to 25 Servings ≈ 4 Choux per person.**

Croquembouche (piece montée) is a traditional French dessert; a tower of profiteroles; choux pastry puffs filled with vanilla pastry cream and coated in a thin crust of crispy caramel. The name comes from the French words croque-en-bouche, meaning 'crunch in the mouth'. The delicious pyramid usually rests on a base or stand made of nougatine. Nougatine is generally used for assembling elaborate cakes, Easter eggs, decorating in pastry or for making candy. Croquembouche is often served at weddings, baptisms and first communions.

### **Nougatine Stand**

#### **Caramel Recipe**

1/2 cup (125ml) light corn syrup or glucose

1/2 cup (125ml) water

1.1 lb (500g) sugar cubes or pearl sugar (these sugars are more pure and thus less likely to crystalize).

#### **To add into the caramel to make nougatine**

8 ounces (250g) sliced almonds, hot

2 Tbsp (30g) salted butter or regular butter.



### **Caramel and Nougatine Method**

Turn oven on to 250°F (125°C). Lightly toast almonds for about 20 minutes. In a large saucepan combine corn syrup, water and sugar. Cover and cook mixture on high heat for 5 minutes. (Avoid stirring mixture until caramel stage is reached). Remove the lid, reduce heat to medium high and cook to light to medium amber; 340/345°F (170/175°C). Then, turn off the heat and stir in the hot almonds and butter. Turn the mixture out onto a silicone mat. Let stand a couple of minutes. Work the nougatine from the silicone mat to protect your hands; folding nougatine in every direction to cool it down a bit and make it more malleable. Now, the temperature of the nougatine should be around 185°F(85°C). Greasing kitchen utensils are not necessary since the nougatine contains butter. Leave oven on at 300°F (150°C). Roll out nougatine into a 4 millimeter thick disk. Transfert nougatine into a 9 inch (23cm) round cake pan and form into a mold. Reheat nougatine in the oven as you go. Trim off excess nougatine and save scraps. Professionals use a metal rolling pin and metal cookie cutters; making things easier.

Let cool off nougatine at room temperature until it has hardened before unmolding. For the dent de loup (wolf's teeth), make another batch of nougatine. Roll out into a large rectangle and cut out into two 2.5 inch (6cm) strips. Rewarm and cut strips into 1 inch (2.5cm) rectangles; make about 20. Rewarm what's left and cut out a 4 inch (10cm) and a 6 inch (15cm) disk. Cut three 4 inch (10cm) moon shapes for the top and make smaller ones for further decoration if desired. Nougatine can be stored wrapped up at room temperature for weeks. The nougatine leftovers can be reused or crushed into pieces and added into ice cream, custard, plated dessert garnishing.

### **Nougatine Assembly**

Assemble nougatine using a clear liquid stage caramel; 320°F (160°C). Immerse the bottom of the saucepan in cold water to stop cooking.

## Choux Pastry / Pâte à Choux Recipe (For 84 Choux).

1 cup (250ml) water  
1 cup (250ml) milk  
16 Tbsp (250g) unsalted butter  
2 tsp (10g) salt  
4 tsp (20g) granulated sugar  
2 cups (300g) all-purpose flour  
9 to 10 ea. (450g to 500g) large eggs  
Powdered sugar for dusting.



### Method

Bring water, milk, butter, sugar and salt to a boil in a medium saucepan. Remove from heat. Using a wooden spoon, quickly stir in flour. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring constantly, until mixture pulls away from sides for about a minute. Transfer to the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment or whisk if using a Magic Mill Mixer. Mix on low speed for about 1 minute to get the steam out and cool down a bit, then add two-third of the eggs at once and beat on low speed until a soft peak forms when batter is touched with your finger. Add one more egg and the last one if necessary. Follow the same method if mixed by hand using a rubber spatula.

Pipe choux on 3 large baking sheets (28 puffs per tray) lined with a silicon mat or parchment using a 5/8" / 0.625" / 15.8 mm open star pastry tip. The use of a star piping tip (or nozzle) to pipe pâte à choux is essential to allowing the batter to expand evenly with minimal cracking during the baking process. The ridges created by piping the pâte à choux with a star tip creates gaps that allows the choux to expand evenly during baking. Dust choux with powdered sugar before baking. Unbaked piped pâte à choux can be refrigerated a couple of days or frozen for weeks before being baked; place frozen choux on a baking tray and bake right away in the preheated oven.

### Baking

Bake two sheet pans for the first batch and one for the second. Bake in a preheated 450°F (230°C) oven for 5 minutes, then lower oven temp to 350°F (180°C) and continue baking for 30 minutes more. Do not open the oven door during baking or it will deflate. Then, turn oven off leaving the door ajar for 15 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool completely on wire rack. If using a convection oven, the baking time may be shortened by 5 minute or so. Baked puffs can be refrigerated up to 2 days or frozen for months before being filled.



### **Royal Icing (Optional)**

1 ea. (30g) egg white

7 to 8 ounces (210g/250g) powdered sugar, sifted

A few drop of lemon juice.

### **Method**

In a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment beat all ingredient together on high speed until stiff peaks. Use glace royal for decoration using a very small open star or plain pastry tip. Royal icing dries out very quickly so make sure the icing is covered during piping. Store royal icing for weeks in the refrigerator. Whip icing before reusing.

### **Vanilla Mousseline Filling (For 84 Choux Pastry).**

4 cups (1L) milk

3 vanilla beans, scrap out the seeds or 1 tsp (5ml) vanilla extract

1.2 cups (240g) granulated sugar

9 ea. (180g) egg yolks (freeze egg whites for later use)

3 Tbsp (45g) flour

3 Tbsp (45g) corn starch

17 Tbsp (250g) high quality unsalted butter, at room temp

### **To whip with cool custard**

17 Tbsp (250g) high quality unsalted butter, at room temp.

### **Method**

Bring milk, half of the sugar and vanilla to a simmer. Meanwhile in a separate bowl, beat egg yolks with remaining sugar to blend and add flour and corn starch. Turn off the heat. Whisk hot milk gradually into the yolk mixture. Return custard to the stove, bring to boil and cook for 2 minutes on medium high heat whisking constantly. Turn off the heat and whisk in the first 17 tablespoons (250g) butter. Cool custard to 65°F (18°C), remove vanilla pods and beat on high speed for one minute then add remaining 17 tablespoons (250g) butter and continue beating until creamy and fluffy; about 5 minutes. (If the mixture turns out grainy, warm up the mixer bowl over the stove or use a blow torch to soften the fat particles). The Mousseline can be kept refrigerated for up to 4 days. Stuff puffs completely and scrape out any excess cream that comes out and arrange choux upside down on trays. At that point the filled choux can be refrigerated a day before being glazed. Since caramel reacts to humidity; avoid refrigeration.



### **For the Choux**

Make one caramel recipe and cook sugar mixture to light amber caramel; 340°F (170°C). Dip top of filled puffs in hot caramel. Place puffs, glazed side up, on a tray. Do not use tong neither fork; that's how you would burn yourself! just hold the choux from its bottom base leaving enough space free for the caramel to stick. Reheat caramel until liquid again if it becomes too thick; When dealing with caramel, always have a bowl with ice water near by just in case of an accidental burn. Dip some puffs in caramel and pearl sugar if desired; about 20.

### **For The Final Croquembouche Assembly (For 84 Filled Choux).**

#### **Caramel**

1 cup (250ml) light corn syrup or glucose

1 cup (250ml) water

2.2 lb (1kg) sugar cubes or pearl sugar.



The use of a croquembouche cone is highly recommended but you can succeed just the way I did it using a nougatine stand and disks.

In a large saucepan, cook sugar mixture to light amber caramel; 340°F (170°C). Immerse bottom saucepan in cold water to stop cooking. Carefully dip each puff (one at a time) in hot caramel; on its bottom and both sides and arrange puffs in circle following the shape of the nougatine stand. The first row should handle 12 choux (depending on the size of puffs though). Avoid gaps between the puffs but rather tight them up ensuring a solid foundation. Then, add the second story which goes by 11 puffs, then 10 and continue building up the profiterole tower. Add and glue with hot caramel the 6 inch (15cm) nougatine disk after the 4th story to stabilise the tower. Continue building the croquembouche until done; about 10 rows. The last one should hold 3 to 4 puffs. Top with the last 4 inch (10cm) nougatine disk on which the 3 half moon shapes are glued. Add more nougatine and sugar work decorations as well as dragées if desired. Dragée is a bite-sized, colorful form of confectionery with a hard outer shell also called Jordan Almonds.

Caramel leftovers can be reused; pour hot caramel onto a silicone mat or parchment. Let cool and break into pieces and store in an air-tight container. To clean your saucepan in which caramel sticks – cover with water, put a lid on and bring to boil. Let simmer for 20 minutes. Turn off the heat, let cool and rinse.

Once the croquembouche center piece is built; avoid refrigeration. This kind of center piece is usually put on display at room temperature (not under the sun) for half a day max. When champagne pop? serve it – Enjoy!