

CHEESY, PUFFY PASTRIES WITH SOPPRESSATA, FENNEL SEED, SESAME, AND HERBS

Makes about 26 pastries; serves 15-20

REMEMBER, BEST PRACTICE: READ THE RECIPE ALL THE WAY THROUGH BEFORE YOU START COOKING!

Take note! These are best served **warm**, on the day that they're baked. The rolls can be assembled and chilled in advance. If you prepare ahead, keep covered in the freezer and increase bake time by 8-12 minutes.

If, when you slice the baked pastry, the interior looks slightly underdone, simply place the slices flat on a parchment-lined baking sheet and return to the oven for 10 minutes. Tip: use a serrated knife for slicing the pastry after baking.

Want to go vegetarian? No problem— just omit the soppressata.

1 bunch flat leaf parsley

1 bunch thyme

One 6-inch (or comparable) spring rosemary

2 heaping teaspoons fennel seeds

4 ounces thinly sliced soppressata or salame

5 ounces melty cheese, such as gruyère, sharp white cheddar, or fontina, grated (about 1 1/2 cups lightly packed)

1 ounce Pecorino Romano, grated (about 1/4 cup lightly packed)

Red pepper flakes or cayenne pepper, optional

Olive oil, for brushing

One (14 ounce) package Dufour puff pastry (see *note if using Pepperidge Farm puff pastry)

Flour, for dusting work surface

1/4 cup untoasted sesame seeds

1. Preheat oven to **400 degrees** with a rack in the center. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Finely chop enough leaves from **one bunch flat leaf parsley** to measure 1 packed cup and add to a medium bowl. Finely chop enough leaves from **one bunch thyme** to measure 3 packed tablespoons. From **one 6-inch sprig of rosemary**, very finely chop enough needles to measure 1 packed tablespoon. Add the herbs to the bowl and mix to combine.
3. Finely grind **2 heaping teaspoons fennel seeds** in a spice grinder or mortar and pestle. (Or do what I love to do and blend an entire jar of fennel seeds in your blender! Ground fennel seeds are what you'll want to use 95% of the time, anyway.)
4. Place **4 ounces sliced soppressata** on a work surface and cut into thin slices, about 1/2-inch thick.

5. Assemble everything you need to construct the rolls: **5 ounces grated melty cheese, 1 ounce grated Pecorino Romano, the soppressata, bowl of herbs, ground fennel seed, red pepper flakes or cayenne (if using), salt, and pepper.** Pour about **1 tablespoon olive oil** in a small bowl and pull out a pastry brush.
6. Unwrap the **Dufour puff pastry sheet*** and place on a lightly **floured** work surface. Use a pizza wheel or large chef's knife to cut the sheet in half lengthwise, yielding two pieces, approximately 7 ½" x 10" each. Working with one piece at a time (keeping the other piece in the refrigerator or freezer as you work), roll to a measurement of approximately 8" x 15". Place on the prepared parchment-lined sheet pan and chill. Repeat with the other piece and transfer to the sheet pan to chill.
7. Place a sheet of parchment on your work surface. Remove *one* piece of pastry from the refrigerator or freezer and very lightly brush with olive oil. (The pastry is already quite buttery so overdoing it at this stage will only yield greasy slices; you are only *ever* so slightly moistening the pastry so that the herbs will stick.) Sprinkle with **slightly less than half of the herbs**, half of the **ground fennel seed**, ½ **teaspoon salt**, a generous grinding of **black pepper**, and a light sprinkle of **red pepper flakes** or **cayenne**, if using. Lightly roll the rolling pin on top of the herbs once or twice to encourage them to adhere to the pastry. Sprinkle **half of both cheeses** on top, followed by **half of the soppressata**.
8. Using the parchment paper to help you, fold one of the long sides towards the other long side, to cover two-thirds of the pastry. Lightly brush the pastry that you just folded over with **olive oil** and sprinkle with another **pinch or two of herbs**. (You're now sprinkling herbs on what was once the underside of the pastry.) Again using the parchment, bring the other long side up and over to meet the opposite, folded edge, to create a tri-fold. Slide the log onto the parchment-lined baking sheet and keep chilled. Repeat with the remaining piece of pastry. (Be sure to leave enough herbs for a light sprinkling on the rolls just before they bake.)
9. When finished with the second piece, slide onto the baking sheet with the other roll and chill until firm, 15-30 minutes. (You can chill each roll separately if a sheet tray won't fit in your freezer or refrigerator.)
10. Using a sharp knife, lightly score the top of the pastry in 1-inch intervals on the bias, being careful not to cut through the dough. Very lightly brush with olive oil and sprinkle with **any remaining herbs** and ¼ **cup sesame seeds**.
11. Transfer to the oven and bake, rotating halfway through, until the edges are deeply golden and the sesame seeds are toasted, about 30-40 minutes. Let sit 10 minutes before slicing **with a serrated knife**. (It will be difficult to get nice slices if you cut while too warm.) Use a gentle, back and forth sawing motion for the cleanest slices. If you want to rewarm the pieces or give them an extra toast, arrange the slices, cut side up, on a parchment-lined baking sheet and return to the oven at 350 degrees for about 10 minutes.

***NOTE: If working with Pepperidge Farm puff pastry, use both sheets from one 17.3-ounce package. Roll each 9" x 9" sheet to approximately 9 ½" x 13".**

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