

Best-ever Polish Pierogies

From Denise Leisz Pazur as passed down from her mom Mary Zema Leisz who got from her mother Sophia Knybel Zema, who was born in Poland

DOUGH:

This dough is silky and smooth, easy to work with and pinch pierogies together so they stay sealed when boiling. The secret is the sour cream. In contrast, dough recipes with water are tough and lousy.

2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 tsp. salt

Combine in large bowl.
Add 3 Tbsp. margarine, softened. Cut margarine into mixture.

In separate small bowl, combine and blend:
2 large eggs
4 **heaping Tbsp.** sour cream

Add above liquid mixture into dry mixture. Form dough into ball. Knead on floured surface for about 3-5 min, until smooth. Cut in half. Place dough halves to rest in a sealed Ziploc bag while you make the next batch of dough.

NOTE: Each batch of dough makes 24-30 pierogies.

FILLING/POTATO (with carmelized onions and cheddar cheese):

~ 8 medium potatoes, peeled and cubed
1 large onion, finely chopped
12 Tbsp. margarine (1.5 sticks)
4 oz cream cheese
4-6 oz sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
Salt and pepper to taste

[NOTE: This amount of filling makes about 80-100 pierogies. Because they are time consuming and labor intensive, plus pots and pans to wash, I always make this amount. When pierogies are boiled and cooled, you can place them in the freezer in a single layer, freeze them, then place in Ziploc bags and they will last for months. Just reheat them from frozen state in a frying pan on low in a bit of butter or margarine.]

Boil in water until softened and cooked. Drain. Important: Do not put cold water over them to cool.

While potatoes are boiling, melt margarine in frying pan. Add one large onion, chopped fine. Fry on medium-low until softened and caramelized.

Place potatoes in large mixing bowl. Add onion/margarine. Add 4-6 oz. sharp cheddar cheese, and 4 oz. cream cheese, salt and pepper to taste. NOTE: DO NOT ADD MILK (as for mashed potatoes) AS IT MAKES THE FILLING TOO RUNNY. Mix all ingredients together with an electric mixer on low until smooth and not lumpy and well-combined.

Transfer filling to smaller bowl and let cool before making pierogies. (I usually make filling the day before, refrigerate, and then an hour or so before making pierogies, I remove the filling from fridge so it comes closer to room temperature; otherwise the cold filling will reduce the temperature of the boiling water and take longer to boil).

TO MAKE PIEROGIES:

Melt two sticks of margarine and set aside. This is to coat the pierogies once they're removed from boiling water, so they don't stick together.

Take one-half of dough, and flour both sides. Roll out on floured surface to about 1/8" thickness. Cut into squares, you should get about 12-15 squares/pierogies (about 3" square) per half-dough.

Place filling a little off-center on each dough. Fold over and seal well, by sliding top and bottom of dough together between finger and thumb.

Place about 8 pierogies at a time in a large pot of boiling water. Stir once, cover, and bring to reboil. Boil for 5 min. Drain, rinse, then place in large clean bowl, add melted margarine to keep them from sticking together, toss gently. Then transfer pierogies to cool, spread out into an 11x13" pan.

To freeze, place single layer on a cookie sheet in freezer until frozen. Place in ziploc bag, so they can be removed individually, one at a time.

To warm, fry in pan w margarine on low. Top with melted browned butter and/or sour cream.

FILLING/CABBAGE (note this is NOT sauerkraut but "sweet" cabbage):

These are my favorite!

1 large head cabbage or two smaller heads

1 large onion, finely chopped

1 stick margarine

Salt and pepper to taste

[NOTE: This amount of filling makes about 40-50 pierogies. Because they are time consuming and labor intensive, plus pots and pans to wash, I always make this amount. When pierogies are boiled and cooled, you can place them in the freezer in a single layer, freeze them, then place in Ziploc bags and they will last for months. Just reheat them from frozen state in a frying pan on low in a bit of butter or margarine.]

Peel a few outer leaves and discard. Cut head of cabbage into quarters. Place in a large pot of boiling water, and cover. Simmer about 10 minutes, until starting to become tender.

Drain cabbage quarters in a colander. DO NOT RINSE WITH COLD WATER TO COOL TEMPERATURE. The next step will be to squeeze as much liquid out of the cabbage as you can, that's why you don't want to rinse them and add more water.

Set the cabbage quarters aside to cool on their own or place them on a cool porch or outdoors to cool faster.

Once cool enough to handle, place each cabbage quarter in a cotton non-lint dish towel or old clean sheet. Twist and squeeze to remove excess water. Place squeezed cabbage quarter aside and continue with next three quarters.

Next, chop each dried cabbage quarter on a cutting board with a mallet or large knife. The idea is to further shred the cabbage.

While chopping the dried cabbage, melt margarine in frying pan. Add one large onion, chopped fine. Fry on medium-low until softened and caramelized.

Once all the cabbage is chopped, add it to the frying pan with the caramelized onion, combine well, and fry on medium-low for about 10 minutes, until cabbage begins to caramelize.

Move filling to a bowl and refrigerate until you make the pierogi dough/pierogies, likely the next day works best for me.

FILLING/MUSHROOM

These are luscious if you like mushrooms!

Similar to above fillings, you can also rinse, clean and chop mushrooms coarsely (do not put in a food processor and puree to a paste!) Fry onion in margarine until caramelized, add chopped mushrooms, salt and pepper to taste. Then refrigerate. This filling must be cool when filling dough, so the mushroom pieces stick together and don't separate, as this makes wrapping the dough around the filling and sealing dough tricky. Also when making mushroom pierogi, I usually make them smaller than the other ones, sort of like a dainty appetizer size, maybe 1.5-2" square instead of the larger potato or cabbage pierogi.

Plum Pierogies from Aunt Mary Zema Leisz

FILLING/PLUM

Cut into them and the purple plum juice runs out and mixes with dough and melted browned butter.

These are easy as ever! They're made with small Italian prune plums, available in late summer/early fall. Purchase 12 plums or a multiple of 12, as each plum makes two pierogies. And each batch of dough makes 24 pierogies. Choose fairly ripe plums, not hard and green, or soft and mushy. So:

12 whole plums = 24 pierogies (1 dough batch)

24 whole plums = 48 pierogies (2 dough batches)

36 whole plums = 72 pierogies (3 dough batches)

Wash the whole plums, place them in a shallow bowl, and let them sit on your kitchen counter for a day or two to further ripen. When time to make pierogies, slice each plum in half the long way (along its seam). LEAVE SKINS ON. Split plums apart and remove stone. Place plum halves in a bowl.

DOUGH:

Each batch of dough makes 24 plum pierogies because the dough needs to be rolled a bit thicker.

Recipe:

2 cups all-purpose flour

1/2 tsp. salt

Combine in large bowl.

Add 3 Tbsp. margarine, softened. Cut margarine into mixture.

In separate small bowl, combine and blend:

2 large eggs

4 **heaping** Tbsp. sour cream

Add above liquid mixture into dry mixture. Form dough into ball. Knead on floured surface for about 3-5 min, until smooth. Cut in half.

ASSEMBLING PIEROGIES:

On a lightly floured surface, roll each half dough into a circle about 15-16" wide. (This is a little thicker than for other pierogies because plums are a bit larger and heavier.) Cut this circle into squares, each about 4" x 5", or whatever size to get about 12 squares out of this 1/2 batch of dough.

On each square, place about 1/4-1/3 tsp. (depending on plum sweetness) of sugar slightly off center of the square. Then, atop the sugar, place each plumb half SKIN SIDE UP. By placing these off center, you can then wrap excess dough around plum. Fold over and seal well, sliding top/bottom of dough between finger and thumb.

COOKING PIEROGIES:

Place about 8 pierogies at a time in a large pot of boiling water. Stir once, cover, and bring to reboil. Boil for 5 min. Drain, rinse, then place in large clean bowl, add melted margarine to keep them from sticking together, toss gently. Then transfer pierogies to cool, spread out into an 11x13" pan.

To freeze, place single layer of pierogies on a cookie sheet in freezer until frozen. Place them in ziploc bag, so they can be removed individually, one at a time.

To warm, fry in pan w margarine on low. Top with melted browned butter. Enjoy!