

Cream Puff Potluck — Party-Day Recipe Master

Sunday, May 17, 2026 · 15 guests · 8 batches of choux + supporting recipes

All quantities scaled to the actual production volumes called for in the production sheet. Cross-reference with the production sheet for timing and role assignments.

1. Pâte à Choux — 8 Batches

Each batch yields ~700 g of dough. Eight batches → ~5.6 kg of dough total, supporting take-home puffs, dessert puffs, gougères, éclairs, and craquelin puffs.

Ingredients (make 8 times across the afternoon — do NOT scale into one giant batch)

Ingredient	Per batch	Total (8 batches)
Water	113 g	905 g
Whole milk	113 g	905 g
Unsalted butter	113 g	905 g (2 lb)
Granulated sugar	12 g (<i>omit for gougères</i>)	~75 g (6 sweet batches)
Kosher salt	3 g ($\frac{3}{4}$ tsp)	24 g (~2 tbsp)
Bread flour	140 g	1.12 kg (~2.5 lb)
Eggs (weighed)	225 g	1.8 kg (~36 large eggs)

Method (per batch)

1. Combine water, milk, butter, sugar (if using), salt in a saucepan. Bring to a boil.
2. Off heat, dump in flour. Stir vigorously until no dry spots remain.
3. Back on medium heat, stir 2–3 min until dough reaches **165–175°F** and films the pan bottom.
4. Cool dough to **140–145°F** (food processor 30 sec, or stand mixer paddle on low).
5. Add eggs gradually with the machine running. Process or beat until smooth, glossy, and homogeneous.
6. Pipe onto parchment. Rest 30 min refrigerated before baking (optional but recommended).

Batch allocation across the afternoon

Batches	Purpose	Pipe size
1	Teaching batch — mixed shapes for demo	1" puffs + 3" éclairs + 1½" gougère
2	Gougère dough (skip the sugar; add 100g grated Gruyère to each batch)	1½" mounds
2	Small éclair shells (savory + sweet)	3" logs, ½" French star tip
3	Take-home freezer puffs	1" mounds — half plain, half with craquelin discs
1.5	Dessert puffs + craquelin puffs	1" for cream puffs, 1¾" for

Total: ~9.5 batches if every line is at its target. Practical total of 7–8 once teaching batch overlaps absorb into dessert puffs and éclair logs share dough with round puffs.

Bake reference

Item	Temperature	Time
Cream puffs (1" mounds)	375°F	25 min + 15 min dry
Gougères (1½" mounds)	375°F	35 min + 5 min dry
Small éclairs (3" logs)	425°F for 15 min → drop to 375°F	25–30 min total
Choux au craquelin (1¾" with disc)	400°F for 15 min → drop to 325°F	30 min total + 15 min dry

2. Craquelin Dough — 2 Batches

Two batches yields ~60+ discs at 2¼", enough for ~48 take-home craquelin puffs plus ~24 dessert craquelin puffs with comfortable margin.

Ingredients

Ingredient	Per batch	Total (2 batches)
Light brown sugar	100 g	200 g
Unsalted butter, soft	85 g	170 g
All-purpose flour	100 g	200 g
Kosher salt	1 g (¼ tsp)	2 g (½ tsp)

Method (per batch)

1. Knead butter and brown sugar together until smooth. Work in flour and salt until homogeneous.
 2. Roll between two sheets of parchment to ~1.5 mm thick.
 3. Freeze flat 30 min until firm.
 4. Cut into **2¼" discs** (slightly larger than the piped puff — disc drapes as the puff rises).
 5. Place one frozen disc on each piped puff right before baking.
- Make Saturday. Freezes up to 1 month before use. Excess re-rolls fine.*

3. Vanilla Pastry Cream — 1.5 Batches

Yields ~900 g total pastry cream. Split four ways Sunday at flavoring time → ~225 g per flavor → ~350 g of crème légère per flavor → ~17 filled puffs per flavor. Four flavors covers 60+ dessert puffs comfortably.

Ingredients

Ingredient	Per batch (~600 g)	Total (1.5 batches, ~900 g)
Whole milk	480 ml	720 ml
Vanilla bean (<i>or vanilla paste</i>)	1 (<i>or 2 tsp</i>)	1 (<i>or 1.5 tsp</i>)
Granulated sugar	100 g	150 g
Large egg yolks	6	9
Cornstarch	40 g	60 g
Fine salt	¼ tsp	¾ tsp
Unsalted butter, cold, cubed	30 g	45 g

Note: 9 yolks leaves 9 whites — save for omelets, freeze for meringues, or use for egg wash on gougères and dessert puffs.

Method

1. Bring milk + vanilla seeds/pod to simmer. Off heat, let infuse 10 min. (Skip wait if using paste.)
2. Whisk yolks with sugar until pale. Whisk in cornstarch and salt until smooth.
3. Fish out pod. Reheat milk. Temper yolks: stream ⅓ of hot milk into yolks while whisking, then return tempered yolks to saucepan.
4. Cook on medium heat, whisking constantly. The mixture will thicken suddenly — keep whisking through a full minute of boil.
5. Off heat, whisk in butter until smooth and glossy. Strain through fine-mesh sieve into a shallow dish.
6. Press plastic wrap directly on the surface. Refrigerate 4+ hours, ideally overnight.

Make Saturday morning. Keeps 1 week refrigerated.

4. Crème Légère — 4 Flavors

Split the 900 g of cold pastry cream four ways Sunday at the lightening step. Each portion gets its own flavoring whisked in before folding in whipped cream.

Ingredients (each flavor lightens ~225 g pastry cream → ~350 g crème légère)

Ingredient	Per flavor	Total (4 flavors)
Chilled vanilla pastry cream	225 g	900 g (<i>all from above</i>)
Heavy cream, chilled	95 g	380 g
Granulated sugar	28 g	112 g
Flavoring (varies)	see below	—

Flavor add-ins (per 225 g pastry cream portion)

Flavor	Add-in
Vanilla	nothing — leave plain
Mocha	40 g melted dark chocolate (70%) + 5 g instant espresso dissolved in 10 ml hot water
Seville/blood orange	55 g of John's marmalade (<i>optional: zest of half an orange</i>)
Dulce de leche	60 g dulce de leche

Method (per flavor)

1. Whisk pastry cream vigorously ~2 min until smooth.
2. Whisk in flavoring until evenly distributed. Taste — should be assertive.
3. Whip heavy cream + sugar to stiff peaks (~3 min).
4. Stir $\frac{1}{3}$ of whipped cream vigorously into the flavored pastry cream to lighten.
5. Fold in remaining whipped cream in two additions. Stop when no streaks remain.
6. Transfer to piping bag with $\frac{1}{4}$ " round tip (or siphon — see production sheet).

Make Sunday afternoon, ~2:30–3:00 pm. Use within 2 hours.

5. Whipped Goat Cheese Mousse — 1 Batch (*production-day quantities*)

Yields ~600 g. Fills ~40 small éclair shells at 15 g each. With Sandy's salmon mousse covering the bulk of the éclair count, one batch of goat cheese provides the second flavor lane on the apéro platter without producing excess.

Ingredients

Ingredient	Amount
Soft goat cheese (fresh chèvre), room temp	225 g
Cream cheese, softened	115 g
Crème fraîche	60 g
Honey (<i>mild — clover or wildflower</i>)	20 g
Fresh thyme leaves, finely chopped	1 tbsp
Lemon, zested	1
Fresh lemon juice	5 ml
Fine sea salt	1/8 tsp
White pepper (<i>or black</i>)	1/8 tsp
Heavy cream, chilled	75 g

Method

1. Process goat cheese, cream cheese, crème fraîche, honey, and lemon juice in food processor until smooth (~45 sec, scrape once).
2. Transfer to bowl. Stir in thyme, zest, salt, pepper. Taste and adjust — should be assertively flavored since the choux shell is mild.
3. Whip heavy cream to soft-medium peaks (~2 min). Don't overwhip — soft is the goal, not stiff.
4. Fold whipped cream into goat cheese mixture in two additions. Stop when no streaks remain.
5. Cover and chill at least 1 hour before piping.

Make Saturday alongside Sandy's salmon base. Keeps 3 days refrigerated. Whisk to reloosen before piping.

Garnish options

A single thyme leaf and a small drop of honey on top, OR a piece of candied walnut, OR a microgreen sprig.

6. Smoked Salmon Mousse — Sunday Lightening Step

Sandy is bringing the flavored salmon base (~600 g) Saturday or Sunday morning. We fold whipped cream into it Sunday afternoon to finish the mousse. This is the same lightening technique used for crème légère: whip cream separately, fold in two additions, stop when streaks disappear.

Ingredients

Ingredient	Amount
Sandy's salmon mousse base	600 g
Heavy cream, chilled	200 g

Method

1. **Pull Sandy's base from the fridge** at ~3:00 pm to take the chill off. Whisk briefly to reloosen.
2. **Whip the cream** to soft-medium peaks (~2 min). Don't overwhip — soft is the goal. The cream needs to fold smoothly into a relatively dense base without breaking.
3. **Lighten the base.** Stir about a third of the whipped cream vigorously into the salmon base to lighten it.
4. **Fold in the rest** in two additions. Stop when no streaks remain. The finished mousse should hold a soft peak and pipe cleanly through a ¼" round tip.
5. **Transfer to a piping bag.** Refrigerate until filling, no more than 2 hours.

Yields ~800 g — fills ~50 small éclair shells at ~15 g each. Pair with the goat cheese mousse for two flavor lanes on the platter.

Quick Reference: Saturday-vs-Sunday Production

Saturday (day before)	Sunday (afternoon)
1 batch goat cheese mousse	8 batches choux dough (<i>rolling, throughout</i>)
1.5 batches vanilla pastry cream	Fold whipped cream into Sandy's salmon base
2 batches craquelin (rolled, cut, frozen)	4 flavors of crème légère (<i>2:30–3:00 pm</i>)
Receive Sandy's salmon mousse base	Pipe all puffs, éclairs, gougères
Pre-measured mise en place	Bake everything
Egg portions weighed into deli cups	Fill éclairs (savory) and dessert puffs
Freezer cleared, ice chest loaded	

Doneness Signals (post on the wall during production)

- **Panade ready:** 165–175°F, films pan bottom
- **Cool dough to:** 140–145°F before adding eggs
- **Choux dough finished:** smooth, glossy, homogeneous after food processor
- **Pastry cream boiled enough:** vigorous bubbling for a full minute
- **Whipped cream:** stiff peaks but still glossy, not grainy
- **Puffs done:** deep golden brown, hollow when tapped, dried in cracked oven