

Pierogi

Pierogi are one of the most popular Polish dishes. The most popular pierogi are potato and cheese pierogi, sauerkraut and mushroom pierogi, and pierogi with meat. In summer sweet pierogi (filled with fruits, like strawberries and blueberries) are popular.

Don't add eggs to the dough! It is different from noodles or ravioli.

When available, always weigh ingredients. Using measuring cups for flour, in particular, is very inaccurate and will affect all recipes.

Place the pierogi apart on a tray, sprinkled well with flour until ready to cook. Cook fresh pierogi until they float on the water surface.

Toss the hot, freshly cooked pierogi with butter or oil until coated on all sides.

If desired, lightly brown in a hot skillet with butter or ½ butter, ½ oil.

To serve, just pour melted butter over them, or with sauteed/caramelized onions, pan-fried bacon, or chopped parsley. Sweet pierogi are often served with sweetened heavy cream/sour cream.

Dough

Makes about 100 pierogi

4 cups/500g	all-purpose flour
1 cup+2-1/2 Tbsp/280g	water
3 Tbsp/40 g	butter or vegetable oil
1 teaspoon	salt

1. Add the flour and salt into a large bowl, mix together.
2. Warm the water with butter until they are very hot, but not boiling (180-190 °F, that is when the water starts to move and steam). (microwave or stovetop) Too hot water will make the dough a little bit more chewy and sticky. Cold water will make the dough harder to roll out and it will be more difficult to shape the pierogi.
3. Pour hot water with butter into the bowl with flour, mix with a wooden spoon until roughly combined.
4. One of the most important things is, that the dough is well-kneaded! Knead the dough using your hands or with a stand mixer fitted with a hook attachment, It will take a minimum of 5 minutes by hand or 3 minutes in a stand mixer, or longer. The dough should be smooth and soft and shouldn't stick to your hands. Add some water if it's too dry, or a little bit of flour if it's too wet. If the dough already forms a ball, is relatively smooth, but still tough, it means that it's not ready, it must be further kneaded until soft and elastic (after resting time it will be even softer).
5. Divide the dough into 4 logs, about 1'2" thick and 3" wide and wrap in plastic. Let rest at room temperature for at least 20-30 minutes, then it should be easy to roll out.

6. Pierogi dough can also be rolled out using a pasta machine or by hand.

By machine: Sprinkle well with flour. Start with widest setting and reduce by one click until desired thickness (1/16" to 1/8"). You may need to run through machine on 4 several times until dough reaches the right texture. Keep covered with plastic until ready to use.

By hand: Roll out onto a lightly floured surface, to a thickness of approx. 1/16-1/8". If the dough is hard to roll out, set it aside for about 5-10 minutes to rest.

7. Use a cup or a pierogi/pastry cutter (about 3") to cut out rounds. keep surfaces well floured and covered until ready to fill.

8. Place 1 teaspoon of filling, rolled into a ball, on each round. Wet edges with water or an egg white/water mix. Fold the dough over the filling to create a half-moon shape. Press edges together, sealing and crimping with your fingers. Do not leave any gaps or pierogi may open during cooking.

9. Place the pierogi apart on a towel lightly sprinkled with flour (this is important, they can stick to the board), cover loosely with a kitchen cloth so that they don't dry out. Repeat with the remaining dough.

10. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.

11. Cook the pierogi in batches without crowding. When they float to the water surface cook them for 1-2 minutes more, depending on the thickness of the dough, then remove from the water with a slotted spoon. .

12. Drain well and transfer onto a plate.

13. If desired, saute in butter until lightly browned.

Serve warm, pour over some melted butter or your preferred topping.

Fillings

Beef and Onion

3 lbs ground beef (85%)
2 yellow onions, chopped
3 cups beef broth
salt pepper

1. Brown hamburger, drain fat. add onion, cook until translucent.
2. Add broth, simmer until liquid almost gone, cool.
3. Place in food processor and pulse several times to chop finely (but not to a paste consistency).
4. Make into heaping teaspoon balls, Stuff and simmer, cooking 2 minutes after they float to the surface.
5. Saute after in butter.

Bacon Mushroom Spinach

8 oz bacon, chopped
1 large shallot, chopped
1-1/2 lb mixed mushrooms, sliced
2 bunches chopped spinach leaves

1. Microwave mushrooms on high, covered, about 8 minutes. Drain
2. Cook bacon until crisp, remove from pan,
3. Add shallot and cook until tender, remove from pan.
4. Add cooked mushrooms, cook additional 5 minutes..
5. Add spinach a bit at a time to wilt down and dry.
6. Add bacon and shallot, allow to cool.
7. Place in food processor and pulse several times to chop finely (but not to a paste consistency).
8. Make into heaping teaspoon balls, Stuff and simmer, cooking 1-2 minutes after they float to the surface.
9. Saute after in butter.

Potato and Cheese

2-1/2 lb potatoes preferably mealy like russets,
10 oz) cheddar cheese or Swiss/Emmental cheese, grated
1 medium yellow onion finely chopped
3 Tbsp butter
1 rosemary twig (optional)

1. Cook the potatoes until tender. While still warm, mash/rice them into puree, set aside to cool. Do not overprocess.
2. Finely chop the onion and rosemary needles.
3. Heat the butter in a frying pan and cook the onion with rosemary over medium heat, along with a pinch of salt, until soft (but be careful not to brown or burn it). Set aside to cool.
4. Combine all the filling ingredients (mashed potatoes, cooked onion with rosemary, grated cheese), season with salt and pepper to taste.
5. Make into heaping teaspoon balls, Stuff and simmer, cooking 1-2 minutes after they float to the surface.
6. Saute after in butter.

Sauerkraut and Mushroom

Makes about 70

2- 14.5 oz sauerkraut (450g) use fresh or canned (not deli bagged, these usually have preservatives!)

16 oz. mushrooms, medium chopped (cremini mushrooms or use a mixture of varieties)

2 bay leaves

2 allspice berries

3 Tbsp frying oil

2 medium onions coarsely chopped

1 tsp caraway seeds

1 tsp marjoram

5 prunes optional!, can be omitted

1. Drain and rinse the sauerkraut (drained sauerkraut should weight 450g / 16 oz), Add water to almost cover, add bay leaves and allspice berries. Simmer on stovetop or bake, covered, in 350 degree oven for 30 minutes to soften and convert sugars. Drain, remove bay leaves and allspice berries, squeeze out extra moisture.

2. Microwave mushrooms, covered, on high about 8 minutes to extract liquid. Drain.

3. Dice the onions. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil over medium heat in a big frying pan. Cook the chopped onion with caraway for about 10 minutes, stirring from time to time, until soft and translucent.

4. Add mushrooms. Add marjoram, cook for another 5 minutes.

5. Add the cooked sauerkraut and mix.

6. Put into a food processor and pulse several times to chop finely (but not to a paste consistency). You can also chop it finely with a knife.

Season the filling with salt and pepper, to taste.

7. You can also add finely chopped prunes to the filling. It's important to chop them with a knife by hand and not process in the food processor with the rest of the filling (or it will come out too sweet).

8. Make into heaping teaspoon balls, Stuff and simmer, cooking 1-2 minutes after they float to the surface.

9. Saute after in butter.

Sweet Cheese

Traditionally twaróg cheese (Polish farmer's cheese) is used, and are served topped with whipped cream, strawberry sauce, fresh strawberries or plain yogurt and cinnamon

Makes about 50

16 oz (500g) Polish twaróg cheese or farmer's cheese (Use full fat cheese)
2 egg yolks
1/4 cup (50g) sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 tablespoon vanilla pudding powder (not instant). Substitute corn or tapioca starch.

1. Mix the egg yolks with sugar until combined.
2. Add all the other ingredients and mix until combined.
3. Make 1 heaping teaspoon balls, place in freezer until ready to stuff.
4. Thinner dough works best. Stuff and simmer, cooking 1 minute after they float to the surface.

Blueberry and Cheese

Makes about 60

2 cups frozen blueberries (small, wild type best)
8 oz mascapone cheese
1 Tbsp flour

1. Mix berries with cheese and flour. Make 1 heaping teaspoon balls, place in freezer until ready to stuff. Take them out only when you are ready to fill your pierogi and don't let them thaw.
2. Make 1 heaping teaspoon balls, place in freezer until ready to stuff.
3. Thinner dough works best. Stuff and simmer, cooking 1 minute after they float to the surface.

Instead of blueberries, other fruit can also be used - strawberries, plums (season them with cinnamon), sour cherries, sweet cherries. The most popular fruits for fruit pierogi are strawberries and blueberries. Chop the fruit into smaller pieces, if they are not very juicy, you can omit adding the flour.