**Cranberry Fig Chutney/Brie en Croute**

**Ingredients**

1 ½ cups pinot noir

12 dried figs

1 tablespoon oil

1 red onion, diced

¾ cup brown sugar

1 tablespoon orange zest

2 inch piece of ginger, finely grated

4 cups cranberries

½ cup raisins

1 Cinnamon stick

1/8 teaspoon ground clove

Red pepper

¼ tsp kosher salt and black pepper

Bring wine to a simmer. Remove from heat and add figs. Allow to soak until softened for about 30 minutes. Drain figs and reserve liquid. Sweat onion until translucent (5 minutes).

Bring reserved wine, water, sugar, orange zest and ginger to a boil. Reduce heat and add half of the cranberries until they begin to pop (10 minutes). Add figs and stir in remaining ingredients. Keep on low heat, stirring occasionally until most of the liquid evaporates.

Discard cinnamon stick. Pour into glass bowl and allow to cool.

**Brie en Croute**

Place a thin layer of chutney on Brie round. Lightly dust counter surface with flour. Roll out dough into a square. Place brie on top. Trim corners of dough so that they are rounded. Gather dough to center. Press gently so the dough lies flat. Decorate the top with scrap pieces of dough and adhere with egg wash. Lightly brush to top of the Brie en croute with egg wash for sheen. **TIP**: This can be done a day ahead of time. Bake at 400F for about 20 to 25 minute until golden brown. Blonde spots might indicate the dough is somewhat raw. Allow to cool for about 15 minutes before serving.

**Brie En Croute**

The French term “en croute” refers to an item baked in a “pastry crust”. In this case the buttery rich cheese Brie. Brie is a soft cow's milk cheese named after Brie, the French region from which it originated. It is pale in color with a slight grayish tinge under a rind of white mold. The whitish moldy rind is typically eaten, with its flavor depending largely upon the ingredients used and its manufacturing environment.

**A Little Brie History**

There is a story from An Illustrated History of French Cuisine published back in 1962 and in it they talk about Charlemagne’s (King of the Franks from 768 AD until his death in 814 and one of the first gourmands) first experience with Brie when he stopped by the monastery of Reuil-en-Brie to rest while returning home from a tiring day of battle with his Knights.

Here is what the author writes,

“The abbot ordered up from the cellars some of those marvelous cheeses the fame of which in later years was to spread far beyond the borders of Brie. Charlemagne and his knights feasted well. At the first mouthfuls, however, every one of them made the mistake of removing the crust. One of the monks respectfully called their attention to their error; whereupon the gentlemen abstained and willingly agreed that the advice was excellent.

“I thought I knew everything that could be eaten, ‘exclaimed Charlemagne before the end of the meal. ‘It was only vanity on my part… I have just discovered in this cheese one of the most delectable foods imaginable. ‘And he added; ‘I desire that twice a year a goodly quantity of these cheeses of Brie be brought to my palace at Aix-la-Chapelle… And I pray you to see to it especially that they have a good consistency and also a good crust!’

A nice accompaniment to this rich cheese includes condiments ranging from basil pesto, jams, tart sliced apples, candied nuts to spicy chutneys. Often times these condiments are baked with the cheese only enhancing its ever so rich buttery melt in your mouth flavor.

**Tips for using Frozen Puff Pastry**

* Thaw puff pastry but it must be kept cold. Because puff pastry contains a large percentage (50% - 100%) of fat, it’s exposure to a warm environment makes it difficult to handle, can prevent the air from staying trapped within the dough and will likely lead to the fat melting out of the dough. This means also keeping the dough well chilled before going into the oven.
* Puff pastry should be baked at a high temperature to force a rise. Steam, created when the moisture in the dough is heated, is responsible for the rising power of puff pastry.
* The Oven should then be turned down to insure that all of those wonderful layers are cooked.