

# KOUIGN AMANN

Prep Time: 1½ hours - Makes 9 pastries

Kouign amann (pronounced queen-amahn) originated in the Brittany region of France, and its name roughly translates to “butter cake.” This buttery, crispy, flaky and caramelized pastry is so sweetly divine. I think of this as something between croissant and puff pastry with a copious amount of sugar. This advanced recipe requires a technique that folds butter into the pastry. The key to any butter-layered pastry is using good butter and providing time to rest the dough. It is amazing how delicious this pastry is, made from only six ingredients.

## Dough

2¾ cups (400 g) bread flour  
1½ tsp (5 g) instant yeast  
1½ tsp (8 g) salt  
1 cup (250 g) cool water

## Butter Pack

½ lb (227 g) + ½ tsp per kouign amann unsalted butter, room temperature, plus more to grease the rings or molds, and for the top  
1 cup (200 g) granulated sugar  
1 tsp salt

In the bowl of a stand mixer, whisk the flour, yeast and salt. Add in the water and mix on low speed with the dough hook for 10 minutes.

Transfer the dough onto a clean surface and shape it into a ball. Place it into a greased bowl, and cover with plastic wrap. Let the dough rise for about 30 minutes, and transfer it to the refrigerator to chill for at least 1 hour or overnight. This dough can be refrigerated for up to 2 days.

Meanwhile, make the butter pack. Fold in the edges of a sheet of parchment paper to make a 6-inch (15-cm) square in the middle. Place the butter inside the square, and fold in the edges of the paper.

Flip the pack over and gently roll it with a rolling pin. The butter should fill in the edges and corners. The goal is to make the butter pack an even thickness and as square as possible.

Place it in the fridge until you are ready to laminate. It is important to get the butter and dough to a similar soft consistency—firm yet malleable.

Take out the butter 10 to 15 minutes prior to laminating the dough. If it is still too hard, roll it again with a rolling pin to soften it. Pastry lamination is repeatedly folding the dough and butter to form a multi-layered pastry. Temperature is key; it is almost always better to laminate with cold dough and butter, but they have to be at the same consistency. For example, if the butter breaks when you roll it with the dough, it won't laminate well because some parts of the pastry will have more butter than others, and it won't bake into distinct layers.

When the dough is risen and still cool, turn it onto a floured surface and roll the dough into a 6 x 12-inch (15 x 30-cm) rectangle. It should be a similar shape and size to the butter pack.

Unwrap the butter, place it in the middle of the dough and fold the excess dough from the ends to the center. Pinch the seams and the two open ends.

Turn the dough 90 degrees, starting from the center. Roll the dough into a 6 x 18-inch (15 x 45-cm) rectangle, and fold the dough into thirds, as for a business letter. Turn the dough 90 degrees, and repeat the rolling and folding once. Wrap the dough with plastic wrap and place it in the refrigerator

to rest for 30 minutes to relax the gluten bonds, which will make it easier to roll.

Meanwhile, mix the sugar and salt in a medium bowl. Butter nine 3-inch (8-cm) round rings or nine wells of a muffin pan and set it aside.

After resting, dust the work surface and dough with some of the sugar mixture, and again roll the dough into a 6 x 18-inch (15 x 45-cm) rectangle. This time, spread about a quarter of the sugar mixture in the middle third, fold one end of the third to the center, and spread another quarter of the sugar onto the third just folded. Fold the other third to the center, so you have done your last letter fold (a total of three folds or turns). A “turn” is when you have made a letter or book fold with the butter laminated dough. This recipe calls for a total of three turns, each one a letter fold.

Sprinkle more sugar (not all of it) onto the work surface and the top of the dough. Working from the center, roll out the dough into a 13-inch (33-cm) square. The dough will be wet and sticky, which is normal. Work quickly after adding the sugar, or it will turn into syrup.

Trim about ½ inch (13 mm) off each edge, measure out nine 4-inch (10-cm) squares and cut them with a pastry wheel or a chef’s knife.

Fold one square’s four corners into the center, then gather and fold in the four corners again. Dip it in the remaining sugar to coat the bottoms, and set it in the prepared rings on a parchment-lined baking sheet or in a muffin pan. Finish the rest of the squares and cover them with plastic wrap. If there is leftover sugar, sprinkle it on the top of the pastries.

Let them rise for about 30 minutes until they are slightly puffy. Ideally the rising temperature should be below 86°F (30°C). If it is too warm, the butter will leach out of the pastries.

While the pastries are rising, preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Place the rings or muffin pan on top of another baking sheet. This is to prevent the bottom of the pastries from burning quickly. Put about ½ teaspoon of butter on top of each kouign amann. It may sound redundant to add more butter to these before baking them, but as they bake, the butter turns into a gooey pool of liquid sugar in the pastries’ center, making them extra moist and delicious.

Bake the pastries for 35 to 45 minutes, rotating the baking sheet halfway through, until the tops are golden brown. I prefer baking kouign amann to a dark color, which gives them a distinct caramelized flavor.

Cool the kouign amann in the pan for 2 to 3 minutes, and while they are still warm, carefully take them out of the pan or rings with tongs and transfer them onto a cooling rack. It is important to unmold them while they’re still warm to prevent them from sticking to the rings or muffin wells. Serve warm or at room temperature. They are best served the day they are baked.

Tips: Kouign amanns rise from two leavening actions—first, the yeast produces CO<sub>2</sub>, which gives them a bread-like texture. Second, the butter leavens the pastries, creating steam during baking, which gives the pastries a flaky and crispy texture.

You can keep the unbaked pastries in a covered container in the refrigerator or freezer for up to 2 days. When you’re ready to bake, let them defrost and rise at room temperature for about 30 minutes, then bake following the recipe instructions.