Food Explorers

Apple Cinnamon Hand Pies

USA — California | Baking

Spotlight: First-of-fall apples

Drink pairing: Apple Cider Fizz (cider + sparkling water)

We celebrate California orchards with pocket-sized hand pies — flaky, cinnamon-scented, and crimped with each chef's own fork pattern. Farmers invented them so they could carry lunch into the fields.

Ingredients (makes 8–14 portions)

- 2–3 sheets refrigerated pie dough
- 3–4 apples (Gala, Fuji or Gravenstein)
- 1/4–1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1–1 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 lemon
- 1–1 1/2 Tbsp cornstarch
- 1/4–1/3 cup milk (for brushing)
- 2–3 Tbsp coarse sugar

Steps

1. Toss the diced apples with brown sugar, cinnamon, lemon juice and cornstarch.
2. Cut the dough into 4-inch rounds and spoon filling onto half of each one.
3. Fold into half-moons and crimp the edges all the way around with a fork.
4. Snip one tiny steam vent in the top, brush with milk, and sprinkle with coarse sugar.
5. An adult bakes at 400°F for 18–20 minutes until golden. While they bake, pour cider into your cup and top with sparkling water.

Substitutions: Gluten-free: gluten-free pie dough. Dairy-free: dairy-free dough and plant milk for brushing. Egg-free: naturally egg-free.

Cooking this at home: One sheet of pie dough, 1 apple, 1 Tbsp brown sugar, and a shake of cinnamon makes four hand pies. Crimping the edges is the whole joy of this one — let your Food Explorer invent their own fork pattern.