

### MASTERING THE PUFF

**D**ESPITE THE SIMPLICITY of the recipe, gougères can be a little tricky. These tips will help you produce a perfect pâte à choux (pastry) every time. Correct measurements are vital (A). For the flour, fill a dry measuring cup, then sweep it clean with the flat side of a knife. Always use a glass measuring cup for liquids so that you can see the level of the liquid. And be sure that the eggs are graded large, not

extra-large or jumbo; this is one case where bigger is not better. Dump the flour into the hot milk and butter all at once, then begin beating mixture vigorously with a wooden spoon (B). The batter should almost seize up and pull away from the sides of the pan. Beat the eggs into the cooled batter one at a time (C). The batter will be slippery and a little hard to beat, but it will eventually absorb the eggs and become a smooth, glossy mass.

### A LITTLE BUNDLE OF JOY

**F**or a classic bouquet garni (right), the basic French bundle of herbs that flavors so many stocks, soups, and sauces, lay 3 sprigs of parsley, 2 sprigs of thyme, 1 bay leaf, and 3–5 peppercorns in the middle of a 6" square of washed cheesecloth, then gather up the edges and tie into a bundle with kitchen twine. Or cut a 4" length of the light green part of a leek, split it in two lengthwise, and lay herbs and peppercorns inside one of the leaves, reassemble leek, and tie with kitchen twine. Some cooks leave a little extra twine on both kinds of bouquet garni to tie it to the pot handle, for easy retrieval.



## BEEF STOCK

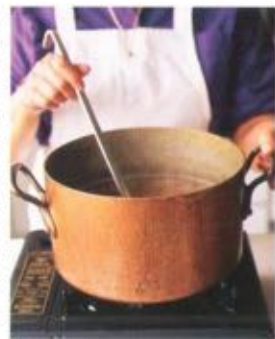
MAKES ABOUT 2 QUARTS

STOCKS ARE THE “fonds de cuisine” in a French kitchen—literally, the very foundations of cooking. Stocks give texture, richness, and real depth of flavor. If meat and bones are browned first with the vegetables, as in this recipe, the result will be a fond brun, or brown stock—darker in color

and even richer in flavor than a fond blanc, or white stock, made without browning. This beef stock is a classic building block for many traditional French dishes, such as soupe à l'oignon gratinée (see page 7). The most important ingredient here is patience: long, slow cooking is essential.

6 lbs. beef bones (shin, oxtail, and neck)  
2 tsp. vegetable oil  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper  
2 tsp. tomato paste  
2 carrots, scrubbed and coarsely chopped  
4 stalks celery, coarsely chopped  
2 medium yellow onions, halved  
2 leeks, trimmed, washed, and coarsely chopped  
2 whole cloves  
8 cloves garlic, peeled and lightly crushed  
1 cup red wine  
Bouquet garni (see box, facing page)

**1.** Preheat oven to 375°. Brush beef bones with 1 tbsp. oil, season generously with salt and pepper, put into a large roasting pan, and roast until just browned, about 30 minutes. Smear tomato paste over bones and roast for 20 minutes more. Toss carrots, celery, onions, leeks, cloves, and garlic with remaining oil and add to pan with bones. Roast for 20 minutes more.



**2.** Transfer bones and vegetables to a large stockpot. Deglaze roasting pan on stovetop over medium heat with red wine, scraping browned bits from bottom of pan, then pour juices into stockpot. Add bouquet garni and cover with 5 quarts water. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce heat to low and simmer, uncovered, until stock is reduced by two-thirds, about 4 hours, occasionally skimming off any foam that rises to the surface.

**3.** Strain stock and discard solids. Transfer stock to a bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 4 hours or overnight. Remove and discard fat that has formed on surface. Stock may be stored in the refrigerator for up to 3 days or in the freezer for up to 6 months.