

## EASY EMPANADAS

Empanadas are like a turnover or pastry. They're essentially a scrumptious filling sealed inside of a half-moon shaped dough, which is then served either baked or fried. Empanadas are hand-sized.

Although all empanadas are delicious, they are not all created equal! The birthplace of today's empanadas is thought to be Galicia, Spain. In most countries, their cultures have a version of a pastry or dough stuffed with sweet or savory fillings: dumplings, pierogi, Indian samosas, hand pies, turnovers, British or Cornish pasties, Italian calzones, Brazilian pastel, Cuban pastelitos, bolani, pastechis, empanadillas. Variations of these delightful pockets are too many to name, and each country has their own twist. Traditionally, empanadas are made with savory fillings, but they can also be made with sweet fillings to be a dessert. Empanadas can be served alone or with dipping sauces.

Empanadas can be eaten for any meal. They can be served as appetizers or snacks, but they can also easily make a full and satisfying meal. Traditionally, empanadas are approximately six inches in diameter. Smaller, mini empanadas (called empanaditas), are half that size, about three inches in diameter.

Empanadas are known for being versatile. They can be prepared with so many different types of fillings, from traditional savory fillings to mouthwatering sweet fillings. Empanadas are fried or baked to flaky, golden-brown perfection. Classic empanada fillings generally contain a protein such as chicken, beef, or pork tucked inside with at least one or two vegetables such as corn, carrots, or potatoes and spices of your choice. Try making them with your own variations to match your personal tastes or to use what you have available at home without a trip to the store.

To make an empanada, a circle of thinly rolled dough is folded in half over the filling to create a semi-circle, and then the edges are crimped together to seal it. Often, empanada dough is made with wheat flour, but not always. Another option is to make the dough using corn flour or cornmeal. Some countries' traditional recipes use a plantain or potato base. The exact content of the dough can depend on whether the empanadas will be baked or fried.

If you want to get busy in the kitchen and try one or more of these delicious little pies for yourself, here are some recipes to get you started. Just remember that there are as many empanada variations as there are cooks so experiment and tailor them to your own tastes.

Here are some tips for making empanadas:

- Once you've made your dough, set it aside and make your filling. Allow the dough to rest so that it is easier to roll out.
- Roll out the empanada dough into a layer that's around 1/8 of an inch thick. Cut the dough into circles.
- Make the filling with small pieces of food and always cool the filling before assembling the empanada.

- In the middle of each empanada, place a spoonful of your desired filling. Retain around 1/2-inch of space around the circle. Do not overfill.
- Once the empanadas are filled, an egg wash can be used to help seal them and also to create a golden-brown crust once baked.
- The filled empanadas should then be placed on a hard surface and the edges should be pressed together firmly with a fork. Another option is to experiment with sealing the empanada using a decorative folded edge.
- The completed empanadas should then be placed on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and then refrigerated for 20 minutes. If you are making the empanadas ahead of time and would like to freeze some of them, now is the time.
- Empanadas are fun to create in your kitchen. Whip up some empanadas for your next get-together, and they'll be the star of the show. Also, mark your calendars; National Empanada Day is on April 8th, in case you were wondering!

(Sources: [baketechnsolutions.com](http://baketechnsolutions.com); [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com); [www.epicurious.com](http://www.epicurious.com); [www.thespruceeats.com](http://www.thespruceeats.com))