

SIMPLE FAMILY FISH PIE WITH A PASTRY LID

500 ml full-cream milk
1 slice of onion
1 bay leaf
3 parsley stalks (reserve leaves for another use)
a few whole black peppercorns
50 g butter, plus extra for greasing the dish
3 tablespoons standard flour,
plus extra for rolling pastry
600 g firm white fish fillets, skinned and boned, cut into 2.5- to 3-cm pieces
finely grated zest of 1 lemon
2 tablespoons finely chopped
parsley
salt and freshly ground pepper
300 g flaky puff pastry
1 egg, lightly beaten (egg wash)

TO SERVE

1 lemon, cut into wedges

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Lightly grease a 4-cup-capacity pie dish. Place a pie bird or an upturned ovenproof egg cup in the centre of the dish if you have one.

Pour the milk into a heavy-based saucepan and add the onion slice, bay leaf, parsley stalks and peppercorns. Place over a low heat and let the milk come slowly up to simmering point. Remove from the heat and set aside for 5 minutes to allow the flavours to infuse. Strain into a jug, discarding the solids. Rinse out the saucepan.

Place the butter in the saucepan and melt over a low heat. Increase the heat to medium. Sift in the flour and stir to make a roux, cooking and stirring until lightly golden. Pour the infused milk into the saucepan and stir continuously until the sauce is smooth, shiny and thick enough to coat the back of a wooden spoon. Gently stir through the fish, lemon zest and chopped parsley. Season with salt and pepper and transfer to the pie dish.

On a lightly floured bench top, roll out the pastry until 5 mm thick and large enough to cover the top of the pie dish, with a little extra left over. Cut thin strips from the remaining pastry and place them around the edge of the pie dish. Brush with some egg wash.

Place the pastry lid on top of the filled pie dish and press the edges together. Using a sharp knife, make short horizontal cuts along the edges of the pastry. This is called 'knocking up' and it helps the pastry form layers that will puff up during baking.

Make 2–3 slits in the middle of the pastry top to allow steam to escape during cooking (if not using a pie bird) and brush with remaining egg wash.

Bake for 25–30 minutes, until the pastry is golden and the filling is bubbling. Serve with lemon wedges for squeezing over.

