

Fresh Berry Tart

Makes 1 tarts | Active Time: 2 hours | Total Time: 6 hours

Swick

Chef's Notes

There is enough dough in this recipe to make two, large 9-inch tarts or six to eight 4.5-inch individual tarts. You can make these tarts as big or as small as you'd like. Keep in mind, however, larger tarts are challenging to cut and the presentation may not look as nice.

There is enough pastry cream to fill one, large 9-inch tart, so if you're making two large tarts, make sure to double the recipe above.

Any leftover dough can be stored in the fridge for a few days or in the freezer for up to 1 month. Thaw in the refrigerator before shaping. Alternatively, you can line the tart shells with the dough and freeze them right in the pans (wrap tightly with plastic wrap). Bake them straight from the freezer whenever you want freshly-baked tarts. Keep in mind the baking times will be longer. If resting the tart shells on a tray in the freezer, it's a good idea to transfer them to a room-temperature tray right before baking. This way, the heat won't have to work its way through the tray before getting to the tarts.

Any type of berries can be used for this tart. It's best to stay away from fruits that contain a lot of liquid (i.e. oranges, watermelon) or ones that discolor (i.e. apples).

If using apricot jelly, there is no need to strain it. Just mix with a bit of water and bring to a boil to create a thin, paint-like consistency.

Making the Pâte Sucrée Dough

To start the dough, make sure all of your ingredients are at room temperature before you begin. Add the sugar to the butter. Using a wooden spoon, combine the two until they are just blended together; you don't want to incorporate too much air.

In a separate bowl, combine the egg, vanilla, salt and the zest of one lemon. Beat with a fork to blend everything together. Add this mixture to the sugar and butter. Mix again until evenly combined, scraping down the sides of the bowl from time to time.

Next, add all of the flour in at once and fold in until it's just incorporated. Don't over mix, as you don't want to develop too much gluten.

Once the flour has been incorporated, gather the dough together in the bowl and place onto the countertop.

To ensure the dough is lump-free, the next step is to fraser the dough. With the dough on the work surface, scrape the dough towards you using a flat dough scraper, a little at a time. Do this just once or twice, as you don't want to overwork the dough.

Bring the dough together and cut it into 2 equal pieces. Shape them into flat rectangles. Wrap each piece tightly with plastic wrap. Press each piece to slightly flatten it and even it out. Place onto a tray and into the refrigerator for a minimum of 30 minutes to chill.

Step 1: Making the Pâte Sucrée Dough

- 4 oz sugar
- 8 oz softened, unsalted butter
- 1 large egg
- 1 1/2 tsp pure vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp lemon zest
- 12 oz all-purpose flour

Step 2: Making the Pastry Cream

- 4 large egg yolks
- 4 oz sugar
- 5 tbsp cornstarch
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- 2 cups whole milk
- 1 pinch salt

To start the pastry cream, first secure the bowl in place. Using a sturdy whisk, combine the egg yolks and sugar. Then add the cornstarch and whisk until well blended (about 2 minutes) and light in color.

Heat the milk, vanilla and salt over medium heat and bring just to the boiling point. Add a bit of the milk at first to temper the eggs, and then continue to whisk and add the milk bit by bit until fully incorporated.

Transfer the mixture back into a clean pot over medium-low heat. At this point, it's important to whisk constantly, until it thickens and bubbles. Make sure to get the whisk right into the edges of the pot so everything cooks evenly and the bottom doesn't scorch.

Once the mixture has clearly thickened and has started to bubble, whisk continuously for about another minute or so to cook out the cornstarch. Pour the pastry cream into a stainless-steel bowl and place over an ice bath to cool. Stir a few times to quickly bring down the temperature. Once cooled a bit, cover the surface of the pastry cream with plastic wrap to prevent a skin from forming.

Transfer to the refrigerator to chill completely.

Note: For a more intense vanilla flavor, the extract can be added to the pastry cream once it goes over the ice bath.

Step 3: Preparing the Tart Shells

To roll the dough, lightly dust the counter and rolling pin with flour. If you find that the dough is cracking as you begin to roll it out, it may be too cold. Just allow it to sit at room temperature for a few minutes and then continue.

To prevent the dough from sticking to the counter, gently lift it and turn it slightly after every couple of rolls. Dust lightly with flour if anything sticks.

Work quickly so the dough doesn't get too warm. Roll it out to about 1/8" of an inch thick. At any point, if you find the dough is getting too warm or it is too soft to work with, place it onto the back of a floured baking sheet and chill in the refrigerator until it is easier to work with.

Place the tart shells onto the dough and cut around, leaving about an inch or so. Remove the tart shells and the excess dough. The leftover dough can just be pushed back together and used for another time.

Gently lift the dough and place it into one of the tart shells. This dough is very forgiving, so don't worry if any tears occur. You can simply press the dough together. Press the dough into the base and along the sides. Pinch the dough over the edge of the tart pan to form a thicker wall. Then gently squeeze the dough along the edge so it rises a bit above the edge of the tart shell. This is a great trick in case the dough shrinks at all during baking. Press the pieces of excess dough together and freeze for future use.

Place the shell onto a tray and into the freezer or refrigerator while you assemble the remaining tarts. Once all of the tarts are assembled, poke the base of the dough a few times with a fork. This is known as docking.

Place back into the refrigerator for at least 20 minutes to ensure the dough is very cold prior to baking.

Step 4: Blind Baking the Tart Shells

While the dough is chilling, preheat the oven to 350° degrees Fahrenheit.

To blind bake the tart shells, remove them from the refrigerator and place a piece of parchment inside each one. Then fill with dried baking beans or pie weights. Flatten the beans slightly to ensure the base and sides are evenly weighed down. Then place the tart shells into the oven and bake for about 13 to 15 minutes or until you can see the edges just start to turn golden.

Once the shells have started to set, remove the beans. The dough should look like it has started to cook and set and the edges should also look a bit golden. Place back into the oven and continue to bake for another 5 to 10 minutes or until cooked through and golden brown.

For even browning, you can rotate the tray during baking. Also, if the edges seem to be getting too dark, yet the base still looks undercooked, place a piece of parchment over top. The parchment will slow any further browning while giving the bottom time to fully cook.

Once done, the edges should be golden brown and the base should be fully cooked. Place onto a rack to cool completely.

Step 5: Preparing the Fruit

While the tart shells are cooling, begin preparing the fruit. Be selective when buying your fruit because the nicer the fruit, the better your tart will look and taste.

Wash the fruit just before assembling and make sure to handle it gently. Rinse the fruit very gently in a colander and then place onto a plate lined with paper towels to drain.

For the raspberries, make sure any water trapped inside is allowed to drain, as any excess water will lead to a soggy tart. Also be sure to remove any stems from the blueberries. If using smaller, wild strawberries, you can leave the stems on as they are soft enough to eat. This just makes for nicer presentation, but you can remove them if you prefer.

Step 6: Assembling the Tarts

- 1 cup fresh strawberries
- 1 cup fresh blueberries (approx.)
- 1 cup fresh raspberries (approx.)

With a heavy whisk, whisk the pastry cream to completely smooth it out. It may be hard to whisk at first, but eventually it will become smooth.

Spoon a bit of the pastry cream into each shell. Use an offset spatula to spread it out evenly. Make sure not to fill the tarts more than two-thirds of the way up the sides.

Begin placing the fruit on top of the pastry cream. Start with some of the blueberries, then a few of the raspberries, followed by some of the strawberries. Fill in any holes with blueberries to ensure the entire surface is covered.

Once all of the tarts are filled with fruit, set them aside while you prepare the glaze.

Step 7: Preparing the Apricot Glaze

- 1 cup apricot jam (or jelly)
- 2 tbsp water

To prepare the glaze, place the apricot jam into a small pot, add the water and stir to combine.

Bring it to a boil and then strain to remove any pieces of apricot. Straining the jam makes it easier to brush on and it also gives the finished tarts a more refined look.

Place the strained syrup back into a clean pot. When ready to glaze, bring it back to a quick boil, as hot glaze also makes it easier to achieve a thin coat. Once hot, remove from the heat and begin glazing the tarts.

Step 8: Finishing the Tarts

To finish the tarts, gently brush on the glaze, making sure they are evenly coated. Aside from making the tart look shiny and beautiful, the glaze helps to hold the fruit intact and protects it from the air.

Once done, remove the ring so the jam doesn't firm up and stick to it. Be sure to remove the bottom of the tart pan as well.

As you're applying the glaze, it may thicken as it cools, which will make it harder to apply. Simply place it back onto the heat and add a touch more water to thin it out. Basically, it should be thin enough and hot enough to easily coat the fruit.

Once done, refrigerate the tarts for at least 2 hours to give the pastry cream time to set. This is especially important if you are making a larger tart that will need to be cut into portions. These tarts will keep until the next day; however it's best to make them and serve them on the same day for optimum freshness.