

French Fruit Tart with Vanilla Pastry Cream



Fruit tarts are impressive desserts that look complicated and time-consuming, but you can definitely replicate them at home. They're not as difficult to prepare as you might think, as long as you streamline the process, which means you should start with making the tart crust, let it chill while you work on the pastry cream, let that chill while you roll out the dough, bake the tart in the oven while you prepare the fruits, and finally, assemble all of those components. Not a multi-tasker? No worries. The greatest thing about this dessert is that you can make the tart crust and the pastry cream up to two days in advance, and assemble them right before you're ready for serving.



The recipe here is for a 9-inch tart or four tartlets, but you can also use tart molds of different sizes (adjust the baking time accordingly)

French Fruit Tart with Vanilla Pastry Cream

(makes one 9-inch tart or four 4 ½-inch tarts)

Pâte brisée (see recipe below)

Crème pâtissière (see recipe below)

Fresh fruits of your choosing (such as berries, peaches, mangoes, apricots)

¼ cup apricot jam, seedless raspberry jam, or red currant jelly

2 tbsp water

In a small saucepan, heat jam and water over low heat, stirring constantly, until it is melted. Remove from heat and set aside to cool. To assemble the tart, spread a layer of pastry cream evenly over the bottom of the tart crust. Arrange the fruits decoratively over the top and apply the glaze to the fruits with a pastry brush. Serve tarts immediately or cover and refrigerate for up to 12 hours.

*Tart is best enjoyed on the day it is assembled since the crust tends to get soggy overtime.

*The glaze is optional, but it does give the fruits an attractive sheen.

Pâte Brisée (pie dough)(makes one 9-inch tart or four 4 ½-inch tarts)

1 ¼ cup all-purpose flour

1 tbsp sugar

1 stick of unsalted butter, chilled, cut into small cubes

Ice water

Pinch of salt

Mix the flour and sugar with a whisk until combined. Combine butter with dry ingredients using a pastry cutter (I don't have one so I use two forks). When the mixture resembles coarse crumbs, add ice water, one tablespoon at a time, and process until dough comes together. Shape dough into a disk, wrap it in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least one hour.

Preheat oven to 400°F. Using a floured rolling pin, roll the dough on a well-floured work surface into a circle a few inches larger than the tart pan. Carefully maneuver dough into the tart pan, trimming excess with a paring knife. Prick the bottom of the dough with a fork to prevent the dough from puffing up as it bakes. Blind bake until lightly browned, about 15 minutes. Set aside to cool.

*Be gentle when working with the dough (barely any kneading) for a flakier texture.

*Don't stretch the dough when trying to fit it in the tart pan or it will shrink during baking.

Crème Pâtissière (vanilla pastry cream)

Adapted from Ina Garten, "Barefoot in Paris"

(yields 2 cups)

5 egg yolks, room temperature

¾ cup sugar

3 tbsp cornstarch

1 ½ cup hot milk

1 tsp vanilla extract, or the seeds of one vanilla bean

1 tbsp unsalted butter

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the egg yolks and sugar on medium-high speed for 4 minutes, or until very thick. Reduce to low speed, and add the cornstarch.

With the mixer still on low, slowly pour the hot milk into the egg mixture. Pour the mixture into a saucepan and cook over low heat, vigorously whisking until the mixture thickens, 5 to 7 minutes; the custard will come together and become very thick, like pudding. As soon as the pastry cream reaches this stage, remove the pan from the heat and stir in the vanilla extract and the butter. Transfer the pastry cream to a bowl, place a piece of plastic wrap directly on the surface to prevent a skin from forming, and refrigerate until cold.

*If there are few specks of cooked egg white in your pastry cream, strain it through a sieve.

