

Perfect pastry

Basic pastry skills are easy to master with baking king **Eric Lanlard**'s three delicious tart recipes

PHOTOGRAPHS *Tara Fisher*



People worry about making pastry, but this shortcrust recipe is simple to follow, and you'll notice the homemade difference in taste and texture. Pastry is the key to a good tart and there are a few rules: don't over-mix; don't use too much flour when rolling; don't over-stretch it; and give it time to rest before baking. For a tart, you want the pastry to be as thick as a £1 coin, and the other important thing is to bake it correctly – it must be crisp. I find I get great results by putting my tart tins directly on the oven rack, so that direct heat reaches the base of the pastry. My basic shortcrust recipe is easily flavoured with nuts or turned into a sweet pastry, depending on your filling. ▶

Master pâtissier Eric Lanlard runs Cake Boy, a cookery school and glamorous café in south-west London. He also makes bespoke cakes and is currently fronting More4's series *Baking Mad* with Eric Lanlard on Sundays at 4.05pm (cake-boy.co.uk).



Lemon and passionfruit tart
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Shortcrust pastry case

You will need a 23-24cm diameter loose-bottomed round tart tin, 3-3.5cm deep, or a 11 x 34cm rectangular loose-bottomed tart tin.

Prep 15 mins **Total time** 45 mins, plus chilling

Get ahead Make and bake the pastry case the day before, store in an airtight container and fill and bake as needed. The baked case can also be frozen

250g plain flour
125g cold unsalted butter, diced
1 large egg yolk

1 Lightly grease your tart tin with butter. Sift the flour into a bowl. Add a pinch of salt and the butter and rub it in with your fingertips until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs.

2 Add the egg yolk, then use a round-bladed knife to mix it in. Bring the mixture together to form a dough by adding 2-3 tablespoons of chilled water – add the water gradually to prevent the dough from becoming too sticky.

3 Form the dough into a ball and knead it briefly on a lightly floured surface.

4 Roll out the dough on to a sheet of clingfilm – lightly dusted with flour – until it's a little larger than your tart tin and to the thickness of a pound coin.

5 Fold the pastry and clingfilm over the rolling pin and drape it over the tart tin. Press the pastry down into the tin and gently remove the clingfilm. Don't worry if bits of the pastry break off when you put

it in your tin; simply patch it up and press it together, leaving any excess pastry overhanging the tin edge. Prick the base of the pastry with a fork. Chill for 30 minutes.

6 To blind bake the pastry case, preheat the oven to 200°C, fan 180°C, gas 6. Line the pastry with nonstick baking paper and fill with ceramic baking beans (they conduct more heat than dried beans or rice). Bake for 20 minutes until the pastry is lightly golden in colour. Remove the baking beans and baking paper and put the pastry case back in the oven for 10 minutes to dry out the base. Leave to cool. Using a sharp serrated knife, carefully trim any excess pastry from around the top edge of the baked pastry case.

Tip

If you're using the pastry case for a liquid filling, brush the inside of the case with egg-wash (1 beaten egg mixed with 1 tbsp of milk) after taking out the baking beans, and cook for 10 minutes to seal the tart and keep the crunchiness for longer.

Fig and Dolcelatte tart with walnut pastry

Serves 6-8

I like to serve this at room temperature with a lightly dressed green salad.

Prep 15 mins **Total time** 50 mins, plus making the pastry case

Get ahead Make the day before

1 rectangular shortcrust pastry case (11 x 34cm) made with the addition of 75g finely chopped walnuts, see below

For the filling

8 ripe figs, cut into quarters

100g lardons

olive oil

75g mascarpone

1 large egg, beaten

1 tbsp milk

2 tsp chopped thyme, plus extra sprigs for decorating

150g Dolcelatte, in cubes

1 Make the shortcrust pastry as per the recipe opposite, adding the walnuts at the end of step one. Line a 11 x 34cm rectangular, loose-bottomed tart tin with the pastry and blind bake, as before.

2 Preheat the oven to 200°C, fan 180°C, gas 6. Arrange the figs into lines inside the cooked pastry case. Place in the oven and cook for 10-12 minutes until they begin to soften. Meanwhile, lightly fry the lardons in a little olive oil until they begin to colour; set aside.

3 Put the mascarpone in a bowl and stir to soften it. Add the beaten egg and milk and whisk gently until you have a smooth mixture. Season with a little salt and pepper then add the chopped thyme.

4 Scatter the cooked lardons and the Dolcelatte over the softened figs, then pour the mascarpone and egg mixture over the top. Place on a baking sheet and bake for 20 minutes or until the filling is set and golden. Leave to rest for 5 minutes before removing from the tin. Garnish with the sprigs of thyme.

■ 503cals; 38g fat (18g sat fat); 13g protein; 30g carbs; 6g total sugars; 1g salt ▶

Tip

Always put a baking tray under the tart tin – if any filling bubbles up and over the edges, it will avoid any dripping on to the floor of your oven.





Aubergine, tomato and halloumi Provençal tart

Serves 6-8 **V**

Prep 20 mins **Total time** 1 hr 35 mins, plus making the pastry case

Get ahead Make the day before

1 round shortcrust pastry case (see recipe on page 54)

For the filling

3 tbsp olive oil, plus a little extra

2 medium red onions, halved and sliced

1 medium aubergine, trimmed

200g ricotta

2 large eggs, beaten

50ml double cream

150g halloumi cheese, sliced

150g cherry tomatoes, halved

1 tbsp capers, rinsed

6 anchovies, sliced lengthways to create thin strips (optional)

a handful of oregano or thyme leaves

a few sprigs of basil (optional)

1 Heat the 3 tablespoons of oil in a heavy-based pan, add the red

onions with a sprinkle of salt and gently sweat them for 30 minutes until they begin to turn golden; stir occasionally.

2 Meanwhile, slice the aubergine into 1cm-thick rounds. Brush both sides with olive oil and heat a griddle pan or heavy-based frying pan. Cook the aubergine until lightly browned on both sides – you may need to do this in batches.

3 In a bowl, mix the ricotta with the eggs and cream until smooth, then season with salt and pepper.

4 Cover the base of the pastry case with the onions, then overlap slices of aubergine and halloumi on top. Cover this layer with the halved cherry tomatoes. Pour over the ricotta and egg mixture and scatter over the capers, anchovies, if using, and a generous sprinkling of oregano or thyme leaves. Bake for 20-25 minutes until set and golden.

■ 456cals; 33g fat (17g sat fat); 13.5g protein; 30g carbs; 3.5g total sugars; 1.2g salt



Reader offer

To order a copy of Eric Lanlard's *Home Bake* (Mitchell Beazley, £20) for the special price of £15 including p&p, call 01903 828503 or email mailorders@lbsltd.co.uk and quote 'MB316' before 30 September 2011*.

Lemon and passionfruit tart

Serves 8-12

Serve with chilled crème fraîche.

Prep 10 mins **Total time** 1 hr, plus infusing and the pastry case

Get ahead Make the day before

1 round shortcrust pastry case (see recipe on page 54) made with the addition of 25g icing sugar, 15g desiccated coconut (lightly toasted) and 1 tsp vanilla extract, see below

For the lime drizzle

125g caster sugar

1 x 28g pack mint, leaves only

2 limes, sliced

For the filling

6 large eggs

200g caster sugar

200ml double cream

juice and zest of 2 lemons

2 ripe passionfruit, halved

4 tbsp apricot baking glaze icing sugar, for dusting

1 For the lime drizzle, place the sugar in a pan with 100ml water and bring to the boil. Add the mint and lime slices, and simmer for 10 minutes then leave to cool; cover and infuse for 2 hours.

2 Make the pastry as per the master recipe, adding the coconut and icing sugar at the end of step 1. Replace 1 tsp of the water with the vanilla extract. This pastry needs to chill for 1 hour before blind baking as before.

3 Preheat the oven to 150°C, fan 130°C, gas 2. In a bowl, using an electric hand whisk, mix the eggs and sugar until pale. Add the cream then the juice and zest of the lemons. Scoop the pulp from the passionfruit shells and add to the cream mixture. Pour the mixture into a large measuring jug.

4 Place your cooked pastry case on a baking tray in the oven and pull out the oven shelf a bit. Pour from the jug to fill the tart case to the top. Slide the shelf back in and close the oven door. Bake the tart for 45-50 minutes until it is set but still a little wobbly in the middle. Leave to cool in the tin.

5 Warm the apricot glaze in a small pan then use a pastry brush to glaze the top of the tart. Strain the lime drizzle, discarding the lime and mint. Dust the tart with icing sugar and serve with the lime drizzle.

■ 423cals; 23g fat (13g sat fat); 7g protein; 51g carbs; 33g total sugars; 0.3g salt ♦