



FRESH FRUIT TART

Serves **8**
Preparation time **30 minutes,**
plus cooling
Cooking time **20-25 minutes**

INGREDIENTS

- 1 x 375g pack ready-rolled sweet shortcrust pastry, chilled

For the crème pâtissière
(makes 400ml/14fl oz)

- 4 egg yolks
- 100g/4oz golden caster sugar
- 25g/1oz cornflour
- 1 vanilla pod, split
- 350ml/12fl oz milk

To finish the tart

- Good-quality fruit preserve
- Selection of prepared exotic fruits, including papaya, mango, passionfruit, berries and starfruit
- 2 tbsp apricot jam, warmed

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C, 400°F, Gas 6 and lightly butter the base and sides of a 22cm/8½in loose-bottomed flan tin.

2. On a lightly floured work surface, roll out the chilled pastry until it's thin and large enough to overlap the sides of the flan tin by at least 5cm/2in. Lift the pastry over a rolling pin, drape it over the tin and gently press it into the base and up the sides. Trim the excess pastry by working the rolling pin back and forth across the top. Prick the base of the pastry case with a fork.

3. Line the raw pastry case with greaseproof paper and fill to the brim with ceramic baking beans (they conduct more heat than the dried beans often recommended). Bake in the preheated oven for

10 minutes until the pastry is golden brown. Remove the baking beans and paper then put the pastry case back in the oven for 5-10 minutes to dry out the base.

4. Next, make the crème pâtissière. Using a hand-held electric whisk on a medium speed, whisk the egg yolks with the sugar until fluffy then stir in the cornflour.

5. Place the vanilla pod in a saucepan with the milk on a medium heat. As soon as it reaches boiling point, remove the vanilla pod and pour the infused milk little by little onto the beaten egg mixture, whisking all the time.

6. Pour the mixture from the bowl back into the milk pan and stir over a medium-low heat until it comes up to a gentle boil (it must boil in

order to thicken). Continue to cook the custard, stirring all the time with a small whisk, for 2 minutes, or until it has thickened.

7. Remove the custard from the heat and set aside, covered with clingfilm, to cool.

8. Spread a thin layer of good-quality fruit preserve over the pastry case base. Fill the tart with the crème pâtissière (give it a whisk to loosen the mixture, as it will have set) and arrange a selection of the prepared fruit on top. Glaze the fruit by brushing all over with the warmed apricot jam. Serve when set.

- As a variation, top the crème pâtissière with whole or halved fresh strawberries, glaze with a hot sieved strawberry preserve and decorate with chocolate-dipped strawberries.



SWISS MERINGUE

Serves 4-6

Preparation time 10-15 minutes

Cooking time 1½-2 hours

INGREDIENTS

- 4 egg whites
- 225g/8oz golden caster sugar

1. Preheat the oven to 130°C, 250°F, Gas ½, and line 2 non-stick baking sheets with baking paper.

2. Whisk the egg whites to soft peaks in a large bowl using a hand-held electric whisk. Gradually whisk half of the golden caster sugar, 1 tbsp at a time, into the mixture until it forms stiff peaks. Carefully fold in the rest of the sugar using a large metal spoon.

3. Dab a blob of the meringue mixture under each corner of the

baking paper to stick it to the baking sheets. Carefully drop spoonfuls of the mixture, spaced well apart, on to the baking paper.

4. Bake in the preheated oven for 1½ to 2 hours until the meringues are dry and lift easily from the baking paper.

5. When cool, sandwich the meringues together with whipped cream and serve straight away.

VARIATIONS (all pictured above)

Coffee-hazelnut praline meringues

Roast 100g/4oz blanched hazelnuts in a medium oven for 10 minutes.

Heat 100g/4oz granulated sugar and 2 tbsp water gently, without stirring, until the sugar dissolves, then increase the heat until it is a caramel colour. Stir in the nuts, and

a shot of espresso coffee then pour over a lightly oiled non-stick baking tray and leave to cool.

Break up the cooled praline with a rolling pin and fold into the meringue mix just before baking.

Raspberry swirl meringues Mix together 2 tsp framboise (raspberry liqueur), 2-3 drops natural raspberry extract or flavouring and a knife-point-sized piece of red food colouring paste. Using a wooden spoon, swirl the colour through the finished meringue mixture just before baking. Top with freeze-dried raspberries, if liked.

Chocolate swirl meringues Melt 100g/4oz dark chocolate and marble through the finished meringue mixture with a wooden spoon just before baking.



Baking mad!

Cake-maker to the stars Eric Lanlard was born in Brittany and came to London at the age of 22 to work with the Roux

bothers as their head pastry chef.

• He recently fronted the successful *Baking Mad* with Eric Lanlard series on Channel 4, while his latest book *Tart it Up! Sweet & Savoury Tarts & Pies* is published next week.

• Eric's own emporium to everything sweet – Cake Boy in south-west London – includes a cookery school and a stylish cake and coffee lounge. Visit cake-boy.com.