Cherry Frangipane Tart

NIBBLEDISH CONTRIBUTOR

Ingredients

Sweet shortcrust pastry

- 125g chilled butter, cubed
- 1 1/4 cups plain flour
- 1/4 cup almond meal
- 1/3 cup caster sugar
- 2 cold egg yolks

Frangipane and cherry filling

- 125g softened butter
- 1/4 cup caster sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla essence
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup almond meal (ground almonds)
- 1/4 cup plain flour
- 400g cherries, pitted
- icing sugar to dust

Instructions

Pastry-making can be a mysterious and tiresome science to 'instinct' cooks: the sort who gleefully deviate from recipes to follow whatever their noses and tastebuds demand at the time.

But an exact science it is, and one that goes beyond just flavour. The proof, they say, is in the pudding, or the chemistry and physics bubbling away in your oven. Not to say

that ordinary cooking isn't exact. Neither is molecular gastronomy based on whimsy. But baking seems to require more exact formulas, swayed less by individual taste and based more on scientific principle. A lot more can go wrong when you mess with proportions in baking. And you can't make little tweaks along the way while it's in the oven. Once it's there, you give it a gambler's kiss of the dice and see what happens at the other end.

I learned the hard way when I first started out a few years back and am still learning, clearly. For example, instead of freezing or chilling the butter, I used butter from the fridge, which was too soft for Summer baking. I was also over-enthusiastic about squishing all that lovely dough in my palms, again making the dough too soft. Plus, I was in a hurry. The perfect pâtissier is patient and has cold, nimble hands. Picture Nigella Lawson turned immortal vampire. Cue the slash fiction.

After this attempt, I'm considering investing in a $25 marble pastry board to keep things cool. Or perhaps I should just stop choosing the peak of Australian Summer to mess with the stuff.

Pastry

- Process butter, flour, almond meal and sugar until mixture looks like fine breadcrumbs.
- Add egg yolk and water and process until dough just comes together.
- Knead dough briefly on a lightly-floured surface.
- Shape into a disc and cover with plastic wrap.
- Refrigerate for 30 minutes.
- Preheat oven to 200 to 220 degrees celsius
- Grease a tart or flan tin with a removable base
- Roll out cold pastry to a size large enough to cover base of the tin and drape over the sides.
- Gently line the tin with the pastry and trim the edges, leaving a little for shrinkage.
- Pierce the pastry a few times with a fork.
- Line the pastry with baking paper and place baking weights over the paper (I use and reuse a bunch of dried beans)
- Bake pastry for 10 minutes.
- Remove baking paper and baking weights and bake for a further 10 minutes or until golden brown.
- Set aside to cool in the tin.

Filling

- Reduce oven temperature to 160 degrees celsius.
- Beat butter, sugar and vanilla with an electric mixer until it's pale and fluffy.
- Add eggs one at a time, beating after each egg.
- Add almond meal and beat until just combined.
- Gently stir in sifted flour.
- Spoon mixture evenly into cooled pastry case.
- Arrange cherries into the mixture, pressing them in.
- Bake for 40 minutes or until golden and cooked through.
- Leave to cool in the pan, then dust with icing sugar to serve