

Blueberry Lemon Tartlets



This recipe is my definition of a summer desert made in heaven: melt-in-the-mouth sweet shortcrust pastry cases filled with delicious pastry cream paired up with lemon curd and blueberries. For the ultimately flaky pastry, use cold butter, don't overwork the dough (be gentle with it, it deserves a bit of TLC) and chill it for a couple of hours. Pastry cream can be made up to 24 hours in advance and kept in the fridge. Happy baking.

INGREDIENTS

Makes 12 tartlets, 7 cm in diameter, baked in a 12-cup muffin tray

METHOD

Start off by making the shortcrust pastry. Place the flour, salt and icing sugar in a bowl and mix together. Add the COLD butter and with your fingertips quickly rub it into the dry ingredients until it looks like breadcrumbs. Fold in the egg yolks followed by just one teaspoon of cold water. (You may need to add the remaining teaspoon or two later, if needed.)

With your hands, bring all ingredients together to form a dough. Squeeze it just a few times to make sure it's homogenous. Remember that when it comes to shortcrust pastry "less is more", not much kneading is required. Kneading will result in gluten being activated and a tougher, dense texture instead of a light and flaky one. So go easy and be gentle!

At this stage the dough should be soft and pliable. If it doesn't want to come together and feels a little dry, gradually add more water. Start just with a few drops to see how your dough will behave. If the dough is too sticky, add a bit of flour, again start with just a handful or so.

Once the dough is ready, cut it in half, shape each half into a disc, wrap in cling film or greaseproof paper and chill in the fridge for 1-2 hours, until it firms up.

While the dough is chilling, make the pastry cream. Pour the milk into a saucepan, add the vanilla bean paste and on medium heat gradually bring to boil. Careful here - you don't want the milk to overboil - as soon as you see small bubbles around the edges and some steam forming, take it off the hob.

Place the egg yolks and sugar in a bowl and whisk with a balloon whisk for about a minute or so until runny and pale. Next, whisk in the corn flour and mix until smooth. Now is time to temper the egg yolks to prevent them from cooking when in contact with hot steamy milk.

Pour in 3 tablespoons of milk over the egg mixture and whisk vigorously until fully combined. Then, while still whisking, slowly pour in the remaining milk and continue whisking until the mixture is fully incorporated. Pour it back into the saucepan and heat on medium heat whisking continuously until it thickens up. Take it off the heat right away, tip in the cold butter and mix in until fully melted.

Transfer into a bowl, cover the surface of the pastry cream tightly with cling film to prevent a skin from forming. Leave to chill in the fridge for about 2 hours.

For the shortcrust pastry:

200g plain flour
¼ teaspoon salt
35g icing sugar
100g unsalted butter, COLD, chopped
2 medium egg yolks
1 tablespoon cold water

For the pastry cream (can be made 24 hours in advance):

240ml full-fat milk
1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste
3 medium egg yolks
65g caster sugar
20g corn flour
8g unsalted butter, COLD

For the filling:

About 270g lemon curd (home-made or shop-bought)
150g fresh blueberries
12 fresh mint leaves, to decorate (optional)

Also:

12 squares (measuring 13cm x 13cm) cut out from baking foil
Ceramic baking beans or rice

Grease the muffin tray. Lightly dust your work surface with some flour and roll out the dough to about 2-3 mmm thickness. Stamp out rounds with a 10 cm wide pastry cutter. Put the dough disc over the cup and gently ease it into the bottom. Carefully push it in, press around the sides to fit into the cup and smooth out the folds. Prick the bottom of every pastry case with a fork; it'll stop air bubbles from forming. Put the muffin tray in the fridge for 15 mins to chill.

Preheat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan. To blind bake the pastry cases, line each case with a baking foil square making sure it fits in tightly. Cover the bottom with baking beans or rice. Bake for 12-15 minutes. Take the tray out of the oven, gently remove the baking foil with the baking beans and bake again for 5 minutes until the bottom is dry and the colour is golden brown. Let them cool completely.

Take the chilled cream pastry and if it appears too thick, give it a good stir with a balloon whisk to loosen it up. For the neatest effect transfer to a piping bag and pipe in equal amounts into the pastry cases. Alternatively, use a teaspoon. Do the same with the lemon curd and pipe in on top of the pastry cream. Pop the blueberries on top and the mint leaves, if using. Enjoy!



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