

Chocolate/Fruit Tartlets

serves 8–12

This is a quick, elegant dessert that would complement almost any menu. Try the berry version if they're in season; the chocolate version is always good!

Dough:

3 cups unbleached white flour
2 T. sugar
1/4 tsp. salt
1/2 lb. unsalted butter
3 T. organic margarine
1/2 c. cold water

Fillings:

1 cup heavy cream
10 oz. (1 3/4 c.) semisweet choc.
4 oz. cream cheese, softened
2 T. maple syrup
1/4 tsp. vanilla
1 cup fresh berries

Prepare the crust dough:

In a food processor or small bowl, mix the flour, sugar, and salt and then “cut” the cold butter into it, cut into tablespoon-sized chunks, using the steel blade on the processor or a pastry blender or two knives held parallel, if doing by hand. Then cut in the margarine. There should be pea-sized chunks of butter remaining in the flour. If using a food processor, dump the contents in to a small bowl. Drizzle the cold water in while stirring. Mix as little as possible. Add just enough water to barely pull the dough together; it should be “shaggy” with bits of dough not mixed in. Knead it very briefly and gently by hand, incorporating all the stray bits of flour and dough. Chill for at least a half hour. Then roll out 1/8" thick on a lightly floured surface. The size will depend on what size tarts you are baking. Roll from the center of the dough out toward the edge, but don't go all the way to the edge or you will have an amoeba shape instead of a circle! Press into the tart/pie pan. Prick with a fork several times, and bake at 375° until light brown, about 10–20 minutes depending on the size. Halfway through, you may need to press the dough down if it is bubbling. Set aside.

Prepare the fillings:

Heat the cream in a small pot on medium-high heat until it fully boils. Turn off the heat and stir in the chocolate until smooth. Let cool for 10–15 minutes, then pour into the prepared crusts. Let cool. For a special treat, melt a tiny bit of white chocolate. If you have a pastry bag, fit it with your smallest tip and pipe a pretty design on top of the dark chocolate ganache. If no pastry bag, spoon a tiny bit in the middle of the tartlet and make a design by dragging a toothpick out toward the edge in a pretty pattern.

Whip the cream cheese, vanilla, and syrup by hand or with a mixer until smooth and creamy. Spoon into the prepared crusts. Carefully arrange the berries (or fresh fruit of your choice such as peaches, kiwi, or pears) on top of the cream cheese mixture so that they look beautiful. Chill.

I usually prepare some of each type so that people have a choice.