

Brioche Fruit Tarts

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Makes 15 tarts

840g / 1 lb 13 oz Brioche Dough
(page 20)/*recipe follows*

Egg Wash

1 egg

1 egg yolk

5ml / 1 tsp whole milk

Pinch of fine sea salt

240g / 1 cup Pastry Cream
(page 248)/*recipe follows*

4 peaches, pitted and sliced

8 plums, pitted and sliced
170g / 6 oz raspberries or
blackberries or a mix of both
(optional)

40g / 3 Tbsp turbinado sugar

These tarts can be made with other fruit, but peaches and brioche are my favorite combination. The not-too-sweet brioche really highlights the fruit. With every bite, you get a yummy combination of brioche, pastry cream, and fresh peaches. The peaches look especially beautiful because they hold their shape well. When baked, the peaches come out even more beautiful than the raw fruit, and the flavor becomes more concentrated. Berries are delicious but can collapse, shrivel, or release too much water. The shaped brioche dough looks really flat, like a pizza, when you put it in the oven. You might think it looks too flat, but as it bakes, the edges rise up and form a nice rim of rich, buttery bread. I tend to want to overfill these tarts with pastry cream—because I love pastry cream—but it's important not to, so that the filling doesn't spill over the sides during baking.

Form the dough into 15 (55g / 2 oz) balls for the tarts. (At this point, you can freeze the balls, along with any remaining dough, reserved for another use; thaw in the refrigerator overnight and then proceed with the recipe.)

Lightly coat a baking sheet with cooking spray. Place the balls of dough on the prepared baking sheet and cover loosely with plastic wrap. Put the baking sheet in a warm place to proof until doubled in size, 1½ to 2 hours.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

To make the egg wash: Combine the egg, egg yolk, milk, and salt in a small bowl and whisk. Brush each dough ball with the egg wash.

Using your fingers, flatten the whole surface until it looks like a pizza, leaving a bit of a raised border.

Put 15g / 1 Tbsp of the pastry cream in the center of each brioche and spread it out, leaving a rim of dough at the edges. Divide the peach and plum slices among the tarts. Add a few berries to the tarts, if desired. Sprinkle the turbinado sugar over the fruit and sides of the brioche tarts.

Bake for about 20 minutes, until the brioche is golden brown. These are best eaten the day they are baked.



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BRIOCHE DOUGH

Makes 4 pounds, enough for 2 loaves

Ingredients:

2 cups high-fat European-style butter

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup granulation sugar

9 eggs

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup plus 1 tablespoon whole milk

2 teaspoons fine sea salt

2 teaspoons instant yeast

Directions:

Take the butter out of the refrigerator 30 minutes before you plan to use it. Cut the butter into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch cubes and set aside. Measure the flour and sugar separately and place in the refrigerator to chill for 30 minutes.

Using a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook, combine the eggs and milk and mix on the lowest speed just to blend. Add the flour, salt and yeast. Mix on the lowest speed for 2 minutes to incorporate the ingredients. Stop and scrape down the bowl. Increase the speed to high and mix for another 2 minutes.

With the mixer still on high, rain in the granulated sugar slowly and evenly. Let the sugar become incorporated before adding more — this should take at least 5 minutes and up to 7 minutes. The dough will start to come off the hook at this point and get a little softer as the sugar is incorporated.

Turn off the mixer. Add the butter all at once. Mix for 10 minutes on high speed to fully incorporate the butter. Stop and scrape down the bowl once or twice during the process. The dough will form a mass around the dough hook and pull away from the sides of the bowl with a slight thwacking sound. The dough is done when it is glossy and smooth and moist but not sticky.

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To confirm that the dough is properly mixed, perform the “windowpane” test: Take a small amount of dough, grasp it between your thumbs and forefingers, and carefully stretch it until it is thin and nearly transparent. It shouldn't break. If it does, return it to the mixer and mix for another 2 minutes and test again.

Coat a large bowl with cooking spray. Place the dough in the bowl and roll it around to coat with the oil. Cover with plastic wrap. Let rise in a warm place (between 75 and 85 degrees) for 30 minutes.

Lightly dust your work surface with flour. Place the dough on it and gently fold the dough into thirds, as if you were folding a letter. Turn it 90 degrees and fold it the same way again. Return dough to bowl, cover and let rise another 30 minutes, until doubled in size.

Transfer the dough to a large bowl coated with cooking spray. Add the dough, rolling to coat, cover with a clean kitchen towel and refrigerate for 12 hours. After chilling, your brioche dough will be ready to use.

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Pastry Cream

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We use a lot of pastry cream. It goes into so many of our pastries, including our bomboloni, crostadas, banana tarts, coconut pies, brioche fruit tarts, cinnamon-raisin morning buns, kouign amanns, cream puffs, éclairs—the list goes on. Pastry cream is a stovetop custard made with milk, egg yolks, sugar, butter, and cornstarch or flour. It adds this other creamy dimension to desserts. I like our version because it isn't eggy and or sweet. There's just the right amount of sugar in it. Because it isn't so sweet, we can add whatever other components we want to a dessert or pastry and know that it won't be sweet on top of sweet. The pastry cream balances it out. It makes *everything* taste good.

Makes 755g / 2½ cups

480ml / 2 cups whole milk

115g / ½ cup plus 1 Tbsp granulated sugar

1 vanilla pod, split lengthwise and seeds removed

30g / 3 Tbsp cornstarch

6 egg yolks

55g / ¼ cup cold unsalted butter

I think stovetop custards are easier than baked custards because there's less chance of overcooking or undercooking them. You can actually see it on the stove while you're cooking it; in the oven, you can't see what's going on underneath the top.

When adding the cornstarch to the egg yolks, make sure it's dissolved and there's no cornstarch unmixed. We use a hand blender at the restaurant because it's fast, but whisking is fine, too. If you still see any clumps, strain it. It should be as smooth as possible.

Make sure to temper the eggs with just a little bit of the hot milk mixture so that they don't curdle.

Once the pastry cream has thickened on the stove, let it boil for 1 minute to cook the cornstarch or flour so you don't get that raw flour taste or chalky texture in your mouth. But you also have to be careful not to scorch the bottom of the pastry cream once it has thickened.

Finally, we mix the pastry cream with butter. The pastry cream cools down as the butter is incorporated. That's really important because if you don't cool it properly, it becomes grainy. If it's still warm after mixing in the butter, pour it into a flat wide container or dish so it cools faster. It should be barely warm to the touch when you put it in the refrigerator. And always cover the surface of the pastry cream with plastic wrap so that it doesn't form a skin, which would make it clumpy when cool.

Put 360ml / 1½ cups of the milk and 50g / 3 Tbsp plus 1 tsp of the granulated sugar in a saucepan over high heat. Add the vanilla seeds to the pot and drop in the pod. Bring the mixture to a boil.

Put the cornstarch, remaining 65g / ⅓ cup sugar, and the egg yolks in a bowl and whisk until well incorporated. If there are still any clumps, strain through a fine-mesh sieve.

continued

Pastry Cream, continued

As soon as the milk comes to a boil, drizzle a little of the hot milk mixture into the egg mixture, whisking constantly. This will temper the egg mixture so that it doesn't curdle the eggs. Remove and discard the vanilla pod.

Pour the egg mixture into the saucepan and continue to cook, whisking continuously until the mixture returns to a boil and thickens, 2 to 3 minutes. Cook for 1 additional minute so that the starch cooks out.

Turn off the heat. Transfer the mixture to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Add the butter and, using a handheld mixer, mix on low speed until cooled, about 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, prepare an ice water bath in a large stainless-steel bowl in which you can nest another wider bowl.

Transfer the pastry cream to a wide bowl and cover with plastic wrap, laying it directly on the surface to prevent a skin from forming. Let the pastry cream cool to room temperature in the ice water bath. Refrigerate until ready to use, or for up to 3 days.

