

LEVEL: ADVANCED

SERVES 4

FIG AND MASCARPONE TART

One of the Biblical Seven Species (page 296), figs have been one of Israel's most important fruits for millennia. Their growth and export powered the region's economy, and their sweet, earthy taste makes them a beloved feature of many Middle Eastern desserts. You can bake this delicious tart either in a 9½-in. (24-cm) baking tin or as individual desserts in four 4¾-in. (12-cm) tins.

INGREDIENTS

Pastry

10½ oz. (300g) plain flour
7 oz. (200g) unsalted butter
1 egg
2 tbsp. powdered sugar
1 pinch of fine salt

Filling

11 oz. (300g) mascarpone cheese
½ tsp. lemon zest
A few drops of vanilla extract
1 tbsp. powdered sugar,
plus more for dusting
1 lb. (500g) fresh figs

DIRECTIONS

Using a food processor, pulse pastry ingredients until they come together in a ball.
Remove the dough ball, cover in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for an hour. Meanwhile, mix all filling ingredients, except for the figs, in a bowl.
Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).
On a floured work surface, roll out the pastry into a disc approx. ¼ in. (3mm) thick and 6½ in. (16cm) in diameter.
Drape pastry over the tart tin. Every baker has a favored method for getting the rolled pastry from the work surface into the tart tin in one piece. You can drape it over the rolling pin and then lift it up, or fold it gently into fourths, transfer it, and then unfold again when it is securely in the tin. Press down with your fingertips so the pastry adheres to the tin. Use a sharp knife to remove any excess pastry.
Place a sheet of baking paper on top of the pastry and fill it with ceramic pie weights. If you do not have ceramic pie weights, any kind of dry legume will work. Beans with heft and a waxy surface, like butter beans or lima beans, are ideal.
Bake for 16 minutes, or until the edges of the tart turn golden.
Remove tart from the oven and let it cool completely.
Remove pie weights (which can be reused) and baking paper.
Pour the mascarpone filling onto the pastry and smooth it using a knife, spatula, or cake icer.
Slice figs and arrange on top, either at random or in a pattern of your choosing.
Dust with powdered sugar and serve.

