

Tarte Tatin

Serves: 4-6

Preparation time: 1 hour at most

Cooking time: 30-40 mins

Ingredients for the pastry:

(Or just buy some puff pastry)

100g (3½ oz) unsalted butter

180g (6 1/3 oz) flour + more for rolling dough

1½ tbsps sugar

pinch salt

1 egg yolk



Ingredients for the filling:

5 firm apples (eg Cox's Orange Pippin, other Pippins, Pink Lady, Golden Delicious, Russet)

a lemon

125g (4¼ oz / 2/3 cup) sugar

30g (1oz) unsalted butter

pinch salt

1. Buy some puff pastry or make this basic pastry: Put a glass of water in freezer or fridge to chill. Cut butter into ½" cubes and chill. Measure flour, sugar and salt into a bowl. Toss butter in flour and then, working quickly and using just fingertips, a pastry cutter or two table knives, rub butter into flour. You should end up with pieces of butter no bigger than peas. Mix 2 tbsps of chilled water with egg yolk and stir into the mixture. Add 2 to 6 more tbsps chilled water – just enough to make the mixture slightly sticky. Add water by drizzling it over the mix, one tbsp at a time. Dump mixture onto work surface and, using heel of one hand, smear mix across counter several times to incorporate butter into the dry bits of flour. You should now be able to bring dough together into a ball. Do not knead dough; quickly press it into a ball. It doesn't matter if it has a few cracks and irregularities. Wrap in clingfilm and chill 30 mins while you prepare filling.
2. Peel, quarter and core apples. To prevent discolouring, keep the quarters in a bowl of cold water acidulated with some lemon juice.
3. Preheat oven to 180C (350F).
4. Make caramel: Place sugar and 2-3 tbsps water in an approx 8" heavy, ovenproof frying pan, preferably non-stick, and heat slowly until sugar

dissolves. Stir gently occasionally and don't let sugar stick to sides of pan (it should all be submerged in the watery sludge), or it may cause the whole thing to crystallise. A drop of lemon juice helps prevent this. Once sugar has dissolved increase heat and let it boil. Watch closely. When you're least expecting it the syrup will start darkening. Remove from heat when it reaches a medium amber colour.

5. Let caramel cool slightly then stir in butter and pinch salt. NB It may splutter so stand back. Drain and pat dry apples. Place approx 8 pieces of apple, cores facing upwards, in the caramel in a circle around pan. 1 or 2 more pieces will be needed to fill the gap in the middle. Arrange remaining pieces, other way up, on top of bottom layer, nestled in the gaps.
6. Lightly flour counter and rolling pin and roll dough until uniformly ¼" thick. Start by rolling gently and pinching closed any cracks that appear around edges. Keep moving dough around as you roll to check it's not sticking and so as to roll a circle. Use more flour to dust counter, pin and dough as needed to prevent sticking. Work quickly so butter in dough does not melt.
7. Cut dough into a rough circle a little wider than diameter of pan. Using rolling pin lift dough onto pan and centre it. Quickly fold over overhanging dough. You can tuck it in next to apples; but it's easier to simply lay it on top, with several pleats, and gently pat down all round. Make a small hole in centre of dough to allow steam to escape and immediately place pan on middle shelf of preheated oven. Bake 30-40 mins until golden brown.
8. You can bake the tart up to this point, let sit, and then reheat briefly in the oven or on the stove before serving. To serve, turn the tart out onto a cake plate or board so that the pastry forms the base. If some apples stick to the pan scoop them out and rearrange them on the tart. Serve warm or room temperature with crème Anglaise (custard), whipped cream or vanilla ice cream.



I made this classic French tart for the first time at school several months ago and have since made it several times at home as it is so easy and so delicious. There are just two tricks: 1) Buy the right apples – they should be able to hold their shape during cooking. Cox's' Orange Pippin is supposed to be the best. Here in the US I've had great success with Pink Ladies. 2) Work quickly when making and handling the dough so that the gluten in the flour does not get over-worked and the butter does not start to melt.

Tarte Tatin notes:

- Tarte Tatin can also be made with pears, peaches, pineapple, other fruit, or vegetables, such as onion.
- However, this is heresy as far as the *Lichonneux Brotherhood of Tarte Tatin* is concerned, the official protectors and promoters of the tart. If you were to so much as whisper plans to make a peach Tatin you would risk never being able to receive the Brotherhood's medal and diploma, let alone wear their traditional blue smock, red scarf, hat and clogs.
- I kid you not, check out www.tarte-tatin.com
- If your tart turns out well, you could consider entering their annual tarte Tatin competition, held in Lamotte-Beuvron, the little town in central France from where the tart originates. Or there is one in LA.
- There are various silly stories as to how the tart was first happened upon, but it seems certain it was in 1889, at the hands of Stéphanie Tatin, who ran l'Hotel Tatin along with her sister Caroline. Poor Stéphanie was a bit dim-witted, and on one of her dimmer days, before baking her usual apple tart, she accidentally a) over-cooked her apples on the stove, so quickly threw some pastry over the top, b) assembled her tart the wrong way up, or c) slipped and fell, dropping the tart upside down. The choice is yours. Anyway, the resulting tart was a huge hit with the customers and it was not long before a spy was sent to steal the recipe and take it to the fashionable Maxim's bistro-cum-brothel in Paris, from where the tart was popularised.
- Traditionally the tart is made by first cooking the apples in plenty of sugar and butter on the stove, and then laying on the pastry and baking until the insides are well caramelised. This recipe is easier as a) you can better control the caramel and get it to the colour you want first, b) it's quicker, and c) there is less risk of over-cooking the apples to a mush. The downside, however, is that the apples shrink when cooking, leaving gaps between them. If you were to cook them first, perhaps in batches, you could then squeeze more in to the final assembly.
- I recommend pairing this tart with a sweet-ish Chenin Blanc from the Loire.

