

Treacle Tart

MAKES 1 MEDIUM TART

Eaten warm with custard or cream, this very simple pud is an old-fashioned treat. It is one of those 'something good made out of nothing' recipes that has moved from its homely roots and is now found in the smartest restaurants. Whereas you could often find a farmhouse version made with wholemeal crumbs, or the addition of a good pinch of ground ginger or a tablespoon of black treacle, today chefs often add eggs, cream and sea salt. You can also add a Bramley cooking apple, peeled, cored and grated, to the mixture with breadcrumbs for a lighter, more fluffy filling.

FOR THE SHORTCRUST PASTRY:

220g plain flour
a good pinch of salt
1 teaspoon caster sugar
160g unsalted butter, chilled and diced
2–3 tablespoons ice-cold water

FOR THE FILLING:

6 rounded tablespoons golden syrup
75g fresh white breadcrumbs
grated zest and juice of
1 large unwaxed lemon
a 26cm deep ovenproof pie plate

To make the pastry by hand, sieve the flour, salt and sugar into a mixing bowl. Add the diced butter and rub into the flour, using the tips of your fingers, until the mixture looks like fine crumbs. Using a round-bladed knife, stir in enough ice-cold water to bind the ingredients together to make a firm dough. (See also page 148.)

To make the pastry in a food processor, put the flour, salt and sugar into the bowl of the processor and pulse for a couple of seconds until just combined. Add the pieces of butter and process until the mixture looks like fine crumbs. With the machine running, add 2 tablespoons of ice-cold water through the feed tube – the mixture should come together to make a ball of firm dough. If the mixture seems dry and crumbly and won't bind, add more water a teaspoon at a time. (See also page 148.)

Wrap the dough in clingfilm and chill for 20 minutes. Roll out the dough on a lightly floured work surface to a circle 3cm larger than your plate. Wrap the pastry around the rolling pin, drape it over the plate, then gently unroll it so it covers the plate. Press the pastry on to the base, pressing out any pockets of air. Trim off the excess with a sharp knife. Chill while making the filling.

Heat the oven to 190°C/375°F/gas 5. Gently warm the syrup in a small pan until it becomes runny, then remove from the heat and stir in the breadcrumbs, lemon zest and juice. Leave to stand for 10 minutes; if the mixture seems very sloppy, add another spoonful of crumbs, but if it seems stiff and dry, add another spoonful of syrup. Spoon the filling into the pastry case without pressing down or compacting the mixture. Bake in the heated oven for about 30 minutes, until the pastry is golden. Serve warm with cream (also good with custard).

