

Tarte Au Pommes

[Apple Tart]

The classic French apple tart consists of a thick, well-flavored applesauce spread in a partially cooked pastry shell. Over it thinly sliced apples are placed in an overlapping design of circles. After baking, it is coated with apricot glaze.

For 8 people

A 10-inch partially cooked pastry shell set on a baking sheet
4 pounds firm cooking apples (Golden Delicious)
1 Teaspoon lemon juice
2 Tablespoons granulated sugar
A 2-quart mixing bowl
A 10-inch heavy bottomed pan
A wooden spoon
1/3 cup apricot preserves, forced through a sieve
1/4 cup Calvados (apple brandy), rum or cognac; or 1 Tablespoon vanilla extract
2/3 cup granulated sugar
3 Tablespoons butter
Optional: 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon, and/or the grated rind of 1 lemon or orange
A cake rack or serving dish
1/2 cup apricot glaze (recipe follows)
2 cups heavy cream or crème fraîche

Use the *sweet short paste* (recipe follows) for your pastry shell.

Quarter, core and peel the apples. Cut enough to make 3 cups into even 1/8-inch lengthwise slices and toss them in a bowl with the lemon juice and sugar. Reserve them for the top of the tart.

Cut the rest of the apples into rough slices. You should have about 8 cups. Place in the pan and cook, covered, over low heat for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until tender. Then beat in the ingredients at the left. Raise heat and boil, stirring, until applesauce is thick enough to hold in a mass in the spoon.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Spread the applesauce in the partially cooked (see note below) pastry shell. Cover with a neat, closely overlapping layer of sliced apples arranged in a spiral or concentric circles.

Bake in upper third of preheated oven for about 30 minutes, or until the sliced apples have browned lightly and are tender. Slide tart onto the rack or serving dish and spoon or paint over it a light coating of apricot glaze. Serve warm or cold, and pass with it, if you wish, a bowl of

cream.

Pâte Brisée Sucrée

[Sweet Short Paste]

For a 10- to 11-inch shell

1 1/3 cup flour, scooped and leveled

A mixing bowl

2 Tablespoons granulated sugar

1/4 Teaspoon salt

11 Tablespoons fat: 8 Tablespoons chilled butter and 3 Tablespoons chilled vegetable shortening

5-6 Tablespoons cold water

Place the flour in the bowl, mix in the sugar and salt, then proceed to make the dough and mold the shell either by hand or in the food processor.

Working quickly so the fat stays cold, combine the dry and wet ingredients in the food processor or in a large bowl, kneading briefly until it becomes a fairly smooth, round ball. Wrap in waxed paper and place in the freezer for an hour or the refrigerator for two hours.

After it's been chilled, roll out the dough on a lightly floured surface with a lightly floured rolling pin, lifting and turning it at a slight angle to develop a circle 1/8 inch thick and about 2 inches larger than your pie pan.

Unroll the dough over your pie pan, press it into the bottom of the pan and lift the edges of the dough and work it gently down the inside edges. Trim the excess crust, and push the dough 1/8 inch above the pan to create a rim and pinch or press a knife in to create a decorative pattern. Prick the bottom of the pastry with a fork at 1/2 inch intervals.

Line the pastry with buttered foil, press it well against the sides, and fill with dried beans to keep the shell from puffing up.

Note: For a partially cooked shell, bake at 350 for 8 to 9 minutes until pastry is set.

Apricot Glaze

1/2 cup apricot preserves, forced through a sieve

2 Tablespoons granulated sugar

A small saucepan

A wooden spatula or spoon

Optional: A candy thermometer

Stir the strained apricot preserves or currant jelly with the sugar over moderately high heat for 2-3 minutes until thick enough to coat the spoon with a light film, and the last drops are sticky as they fall from the spoon (225 to 228 degrees on a candy thermometer). Do not boil beyond this point or the glaze will become brittle.

Apply the glaze while it is still warm. Unused glaze will keep indefinitely in a screw-topped jar; reheat again before using.

Adapted with permission from Mastering The Art Of French Cooking, Volume I