

LEMON TART with PINE NUT CRUST

This is straight out of Thomas Keller's Bouchon Cookbook. It's the best. Period. One of the things I love about this recipe is that the tart shell recipe makes enough for three tarts. So, you get to have dough for two shells sitting in your freezer, ready for you to throw together a quickish, fantastic desert.

TART SHELL

10 ounces (2 cups) pine nuts
1/3 cup sugar
1 pound (3 cups) all purpose flour
8 ounces unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 large egg
1 tsp pure vanilla extract

Place pine nuts in a food processor and pulse a few times. Add the sugar and flour and continue to pulse until the nuts are finely ground. Transfer mixture to a large metal bowl.

Add the butter, egg, and vanilla extract and mix to incorporate all the ingredients (the dough can be mixed by hand or in a mixer fitted with the paddle attachment). Divide the dough into 3 equal parts. Wrap each piece in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 10 minutes before using.
(the extra dough can be frozen, well wrapped, for up to a month)

Preheat oven to 350. Generously butter and flour a 9-inch fluted tart pan with a removable bottom and refrigerate it while the oven preheats.

Remove tart pan from the refrigerator. Use your fingers to press the chilled pine nut dough evenly over the bottom and up the sides of the pan. Trim off any excess dough.

Bake the crust for 10 to 15 minutes, or until it is golden brown. Remove the crust from the oven and let it cool while you make the filling. (There may be some cracks in the crust; they will not affect the finished tart).

LEMON FILLING

2 large eggs, cold
2 large egg yolks, cold
¾ cup sugar
½ cup fresh lemon juice
6 TBS (3ounces) cold unstalted butter, cut into 6 pieces

Bring about 1½ inches of water to a boil in a pot that is slightly smaller than the diameter of the bowl you will be using for the filling. Meanwhile whisk the eggs, yolks, and sugar for about 1 minute, or until the mixture is smooth.

Set the bowl over the pot and, using a large whisk, whip the mixture while you turn the bowl for even heating. After about 2 minutes, when the eggs are foamy and have thickened, add one third of the lemon juice. Continue to whisk vigorously and, when the mixture thickens again, add the remaining lemon juice. Continue whisking vigorously, still turning the bowl, until the mixture is thickened and light in color and the whisk leaves a trail in the bottom of the bowl. The total cooking time should be 8-10 minutes.

Turn off the heat and leave the bowl over the water. Whisk in the butter a piece at a time. The filling should loosen slightly, but it will thicken and set as it cools. Pour the warm filling into the tart and place on a cookie sheet.

Preheat broiler. While the filling is still warm, place the tart under the broiler. Leaving the door open, brown the top of the filling, rotating the tart for even color. This will happen fast so don't leave the oven. Remove the tart from the broiler and let it sit for at least 1 hour before serving. Serve at room temperature or cold.