

Portuguese Custard Tarts

Makes 12

Hands-on Time 30 minutes

Baking Time 13-20 minutes

Ingredients

1/2 portion of Puff Pastry or 350g of ready-made
Bread flour for dusting
140g Caster sugar
140ml Water
1 Cinnamon stick
Peel from 1 Lemon (use a vegetable peeler to do this)
1 Egg, medium
3 Egg yolks, medium
25g Cornflour
Fine salt, pinch
350ml Full-fat milk
1 1/2 tsp Vanilla extract

Equipment

Rolling pin
Sharp knife
12-hole Muffin tray
2 Saucepans
Jam or electric thermometer
1 Large bowl
Hand whisk (silicone if possible)
Spatula
Wire rack

Take your prepared dough and place on a lightly floured worktop.

You need to roll the dough out into a rectangle measuring 36cm x 32cm.

It's best to roll outwards from the middle of the dough. Don't roll back and forth. You should also lift the dough occasionally to let it relax and add more flour if it's starting to stick.

With the longest side of the dough in front of you, roll it up like a Swiss roll.

Using a sharp knife, make 11 indentations along the length of the dough. They should be about 3cm apart.

Go back to the first and press down with the knife so you make a clean cut.

Repeat until you have 12 rolls.

Turn each roll on its side and place on a lightly floured surface.

Pick up a roll and place it in the palm of your hand.

Flatten it using your other palm.

Dust both sides of the dough before placing down on the floured worktop.

Using a rolling pin roll the dough out into a circle. It's best to roll away from you and roll only once before lifting and turning

the dough 90°. This will help you get an even circle.

You will need to make sure the dough is a few cm wider than your muffin tin. It's best to test using your first piece of dough, putting into the tin until you're confident it is big enough.

When you're happy with the circle, place it into the tin.

Press the bottom down into the corners and press against the sides. You may find some of the dough will overlap, try and spread the dough using your fingers and flatten, this is to keep the sides even.

Repeat for the other 11 rolls.

Place the tray into the fridge and chill for at least 30 minutes.

It's best to wait at least this time before getting on with the filling.

In the meantime preheat the oven to 250°C/230°C(Fan)/500°F/Gas mark 8.

If your oven doesn't go this high, preheat to 220°C/200°C(Fan)/425°F/Gas mark 7 and see adjusted baking time.

Add the sugar and water to the saucepan and swirl to dissolve.

Add the cinnamon stick and lemon zest to the pan.

Place over a high heat and leave to boil.

Once the syrup starts to bubble, check the temperature using the thermometer. You're looking for it to reach 110°C/230°F.

As soon as the syrup is at the desired temperature, remove the pan from the heat and set aside.

Add the eggs, cornflour, and salt to the large bowl and whisk until thick and a pale yellow.

Add the milk and vanilla extract to another saucepan and place over a medium heat until it's steaming hot but not boiling.

Whilst whisking the egg mixture, slowly add the hot milk to make a custard.

When you have combined all of the milk, pour the custard back into the pan and place over a low heat.

If you don't have a silicone whisk, I'd suggest you stir the custard with a spatula.

Stir or whisk until the custard is nice and thick.

Take the pan off the heat and quickly wipe the bowl so it's clean.

Tip the custard back into the bowl.

Remove the lemon and cinnamon from the syrup. It should be cool enough to be able to do this by hand, be careful though. Try and get as much excess syrup back into the pan as possible. You may find the syrup has thickened as it has cooled, don't worry.

Whisk the custard and slowly add the syrup until it has fully combined, ensuring you scrape the pan clean so no syrup goes to waste.

Remove the tin containing the pastry from the fridge.

Portion the custard between the 12 cases. You should find you can fill each tart case with about 2 1/2 tbsp of custard if you want to be precise.

Tap the tin down a couple of times onto the worktop before placing it into the oven on a middle shelf.

Bake for 13 minutes (20 minutes for the lower temperature) until the pastry is gloriously golden, and the custard is a deep dark bronze.

As soon as you're able to remove the tarts from the tin, pop them out and leave to cool on a wire rack.

Serve with a cup of coffee. If you find you eat the tart before you've finished your coffee I would recommend you have another!

Enjoy!