

Poached Pear and Almond Tart

2010 First Place Winner, Yuba Bakers from Yuba College Culinary

Makes one 11-inch tart

Poached Pears

1 bottle (750 ml) white wine
2/3 cup granulated sugar
2 tablespoons juice from 1 lemon plus 4 or 5 large strips zest
1 (3 inch) cinnamon stick
15 black peppercorns
3 whole cloves
1/8 teaspoon salt
½ vanilla bean, split in half lengthwise (optional)
4 ripe but firm pears, preferably Bartlett or Bosc

Tart Pastry

1 large egg yolk
2 tablespoons heavy cream
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
1 ½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour
¾ cup confectioners' sugar
¼ teaspoon salt
10 tablespoons (1 and ¼ sticks) very cold unsalted butter, cut into ½ inch cubes

Almond Filling

4 ounces (1 cup) blanched slivered almonds
½ cup granulated sugar
1/8 teaspoon salt
1 large egg plus 1 large egg white
½ teaspoon almond extract
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 6 pieces and softened to room temperature

Glaze

¼ cup apple jelly

1. **To poach pears:** combine wine, sugar, lemon juice and zest, cinnamon, peppercorns, cloves and salt in large nonreactive saucepan. Scrape seeds from vanilla bean pod (if using), and add seeds and pod to saucepan. Bring mixture to simmer over medium heat, stirring occasionally to dissolve sugar. Meanwhile, halve, core, and peel pears. Slide pears into simmering wine; increase heat to high and return to simmer, then reduce heat to low and simmer, covered, until pears are tender (toothpick or skewer inserted into pear should slide in and out with very little resistance) and outer edges of pears have turned translucent, about 10 minutes, turning pears in liquid halfway through poaching time using wooden spoon or spatula. Off heat, cool pears in liquid, partially covered, until pears have turned translucent and are cool enough to handle, about 1 hour. Pears and liquid may be transferred to nonreactive bowl or container, cooled to room temperature, covered, and refrigerated for up to 3 days.

2. **For the tart pastry:** Whisk together yolk, cream and vanilla in small bowl. Combine flour, sugar, and salt in food processor with four 1-second pulses. Scatter butter pieces over flour mixture; pulse to cut butter into flour until mixture resembles coarse meal, about twenty 1-second pulses. With machine running, add egg mixture and process until dough comes together, about 12 seconds. Turn dough onto sheet of plastic wrap and press into 6-inch disk; wrap with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 1 hour or up to 48 hours.

3. Remove dough from refrigerator and let stand at room temperature until malleable. Unwrap and roll out between lightly floured large sheets of parchment paper or plastic wrap to 15-inch round. Transfer dough to tart pan by rolling dough loosely over rolling pin and unrolling over 11-inch tart pan with removable bottom. Working around circumference of pan, ease dough into pan corners by gently lifting dough with one hand while pressing dough into corners with other hand. Press dough into fluted sides of pan, patching breaks or cracks if necessary. Run rolling pin over top of tart pan to remove excess dough. Set dough-lined tart pan on baking sheet or large plate and freeze 30 minutes. (Frozen dough-lined tart pan can be wrapped tightly in plastic wrap and frozen up to 1 month.)

4. Meanwhile, adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Set dough-lined tart pan on baking sheet; lightly spray one side of 18-inch square heavy-duty extra-wide foil with nonstick cooking spray. Press foil, greased-side down, inside frozen tart shell, folding excess foil over edge of tart pan; fill with metal or ceramic pie weights. Bake until dry, pale gold, and edges have just begun to color, about 20 minutes, rotating halfway through baking. Remove from oven and carefully remove foil and weights by gathering edges of foil and pulling up and out. Set baking sheet with tart shell on wire rack and cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes.

5. **For the almond filling:** Pulse almonds, sugar, and salt in food processor until finely ground, about 25 two-second pulses; process until as finely ground as possible, about 10

seconds. Add butter and process until no lumps remain, about 10 seconds. Scrape bottom and sides of bowl with rubber spatula and process to combine thoroughly, about 10 seconds longer. (Can be refrigerated in airtight container up to 3 days.) Before using, let stand at room temperature about 30 minutes to soften, stirring 3 or 4 times.)

6. To assemble, bake, and glaze the tart: Reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees. Remove pears from poaching liquid; set pears cut-side down on triple thickness paper towels and pat dry with additional paper towels. Spread frangipane evenly into partially baked and cooled tart shell. Cut each pear half crosswise into 3/8 inch slices; do not separate slices, and leave pear half intact on cutting board. Pat dry with paper towels to absorb excess moisture. Discard first 4 slices from narrow end of sliced pear half. Slide spatula under sliced pear and slide pear to center of tart. Cut and dry another pear half and slide spatula under pear and gently press pear to fan slices toward narrow end. Slide fanned pear onto frangipane, narrow end toward center, making flower-petal pattern off the center pear. Repeat with remaining pear halves, spacing them evenly. If necessary, use spatula to push pears to space them evenly.

7. Bake tart on baking sheet until crust is deep golden brown and almond filling is puffed, browned, and firm to the touch, about 45 minutes, rotating baking sheet halfway through baking time. Cool tart on baking sheet on wire rack 10 minutes.

8. Bring jelly to boil in small saucepan over medium heat, stirring occasionally to smooth out lumps. When boiling and completely melted, brush glaze on pears. Cool tart to room temperature, about 2 hours. (Tart can be kept at room temperature longer but should be served the day it is made.)

9. Remove outer metal ring of tart pan, slide thin metal spatula between bottom of crust and tart pan bottom to release, then slip tart onto cardboard round or serving platter; cut into wedges and serve.