



Plum Tree House Cook School

Tart Tatin - The Birth of A Legend

Serves 6 – 8

The name is given to an apple tart that is cooked underneath a layer of pastry be it short, flaky or puff. Other fruits can be used too – pear, apricots, nectarine, bananas, even savoury versions are delicious – onion, aubergine and tomato, fennel or celeriac.

The whole gorgeousness of this tart arises because the fruit or vegetables caramelize, and the rich tones of caramel mix with crispy buttery pastry to create a taste and textural sensation.

This 'up-side-down' tart made famous by the Tatin sisters who ran a hotel-restaurant in Lamotte-Beuvron, France, has been a specialty of the Sologne for centuries, is still found throughout the Orléanais, in fact it is one of 'The' most loved desserts through the whole of France. Once it became famous, it was served at Maxim's in Paris where it remains on the menu as a speciality to this day.

There are many ways you can make a Tart Tatin. The following is the most traditional. The choice of apple is an important component. We do not have the same varieties in many parts of New Zealand as in France but here we are lucky enough to have several varieties that perform beautifully for this dessert like Merton Russet and Reinette Marbrée d'Auvergne, or Sturmer Pippin, to name three. Characteristics to be looking for are sweet-tart apples with a good level of acidity, not too juicy, that don't collapse and go mushy when cooked.

One sheet of short crust (250 grams) pastry, flaky or puff made with butter – Paneton or Sabato flaky are both excellent.

750 grams tart cooking apples, peeled and cored cut into halves or quarters.

125 grams butter

150 grams castor sugar

Pre heat the oven to 230° C.

You will need a proper Tatin pie dish with heavy base, or you can use a shallow Pyrex dish, shallow cast iron pan, or cocotte (Le Creuset style).

Place the pan over a medium heat and add 100 grams butter. Sprinkle over half the sugar evenly and lay the quartered apples or pears packed in tightly, rounded side down, over the butter and sugar. Cook gently for 8 - 12 minutes until the fruit begins to colour on the bottom and the butter and sugar begins to caramelize. This will depend on your cooker.

While the caramelisation is occurring, roll out the chilled pastry (I prefer a good flaky or puff but a short will work well too) on a lightly floured surface, to a round slightly larger than the dish.

Sprinkle the other half of the sugar evenly over the fruit segments and add the final dabs of butter if required. Now fit the pastry sheet over the top of the cooking fruit and tuck the edges into the sides bedding it down in the fruit. This is important because it is here that you get that gorgeous marriage of caramel and pastry during cooking.

Place in a hot oven and bake for 30 -35 minutes until the pastry is caramelised around the edges, golden and crisp. Remove from the oven and place a serving dish directly over the tart. With the help of oven mitts, immediately invert the tart onto the serving dish and remove the tart tin. Voila!

Serve hot or warm with fresh cream, a good vanilla ice cream or crème fraîche.

Sarah La Touche sarah@calisso.com 027-315-1165