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Regional Italian Desserts and Sweet Traditions



RIZZOLI
NEW YORK



CROSTATA INTEGRALE ALLE FRAGOLE

STRAWBERRY JAM TART IN A WHOLE WHEAT CRUST

Makes one 9-inch (23-centimeter) tart, 8 to 10 servings

A lattice-topped jam tart is a classic home-baked dessert in Italy—the reward for having taken the time to put up jam and preserves in the warmer months. A whole wheat crust makes this one rustic and satisfying. The dough for this recipe is a whole wheat variation on Pasta Frolla (page 67).

**1¼ cups (125 grams)
whole wheat flour**

**1¼ cups (125 grams)
pastry flour**

**1 teaspoon (3 grams)
baking powder**

**¼ teaspoon (2 grams)
salt**

**1 stick plus 2 tablespoons
(150 grams) unsalted
butter, at room
temperature, cut into
pieces**

**¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons
(75 grams) sugar**

1 large egg, lightly beaten

**1 cup (300 grams)
strawberry jam**

COMBINE the flours, baking powder, and salt and place on a work surface (or in a bowl) and form a well. Place the butter in the well. Work in the butter until it forms large chunks. Add the sugar and continue to combine into a shaggy dough. Add the egg and knead until smooth. Use a bench scraper to collect all the dough. Shape it into a log and wrap in plastic wrap.

PREHEAT the oven to 350°F (180°C).

RESERVE about one-third of the dough. (Refrigerate if your kitchen is very warm.) On a lightly floured surface, roll out the remaining dough ¼ inch (about ½ centimeter) thick. Line a 9-inch (23-centimeter) pie or tart pan with the dough, fitting it against the sides. Spread the strawberry jam in an even layer on the dough.

ROLL out the remaining dough and use it to create a lattice. (See pages 76–77.)

BAKE until the crust is golden, about 30 minutes. Cool before serving.

Come Fare la Crostata con Reticolo

A LATTICE CRUST ON TOP OF A TART is a pretty touch that is not difficult to achieve in the least. It forms diamonds with the filling peeking through. If you plan to create a lattice for your tart, you will need more dough than if you were just making a single-crust tart. The lattice requires about half as much dough as the bottom crust. The instructions below are for creating a lattice crust in a round pie or tart pan, but you can make a lattice crust in a square or rectangular pan as well.

This system is not fussy or complicated, but if you're in a hurry and don't want to bother with a ruler, you can also roll the lattice dough into thin ropes—about the width of a pencil—and use those to create a lattice on top of the tart.



Roll out the bottom crust, retaining about one-half of the dough for the lattice. Be sure that the rim of the bottom crust is sturdy. If necessary, roll a thin rope of dough and attach it around the rim. Fill the tart.



Roll out the dough for the lattice about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch ($\frac{1}{2}$ centimeter) thick. Use a ruler to mark strips of $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch ($1\frac{1}{4}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ centimeters). Cut the strips using a knife or pastry cutter.



Place one set of strips parallel to each other on top of the tart, pinching them to seal them to the rim.



Place the remaining strips parallel to each other and at a 45-degree angle to the first set of strips. Trim any excess dough.



After trimming any excess dough, pinch the ends of the lattice strips against the perimeter of the dough to adhere.



TORTA TENERINA

TENDER CHOCOLATE CAKE

Makes one 9-inch (23-centimeter) cake, about 12 servings

Emilia-Romagna

Torta tenerina, as its name implies, is an extremely tender cake. As it bakes, a crackly crust forms on top, but the interior remains soft and creamy. This cake hails from Ferrara, where it is also known as torta taclenta, which means “sticky cake” in the local dialect. Use a spatula to fold the ingredients together gently, maintaining as much volume as possible. Keep in mind that you want the center to be very soft, so the usual technique for testing doneness by inserting a toothpick or skewer won’t work. And never use your oven’s convection setting for this cake—you want the air to circulate as little as possible while it is baking.

9 large eggs, separated

**2⅓ cups (300 grams)
confectioners’ sugar, plus
more for dusting**

**¼ cup (30 grams)
unbleached all-purpose
flour, plus more for
flouring pan**

**3 tablespoons (30 grams)
potato starch**

**10½ ounces (300 grams)
bittersweet chocolate**

**2 sticks plus 2
tablespoons (260 grams)
unsalted butter, plus more
for the pan**

PREHEAT the oven to 350°F (180°C). Butter and flour (or use cocoa powder) a 9-inch (23-centimeter) cake pan, preferably a springform, and set aside.

BEAT the egg yolks with the confectioners’ sugar, ¼ cup (30 grams) flour, and potato starch until combined. Place the chocolate and 2 sticks plus 2 tablespoons (260 grams) butter in the top of a double boiler and melt, then whisk to combine. Allow to cool. Beat the egg whites to a stiff peak. Fold the egg whites into the chocolate mixture in three additions, then gently fold in the flour mixture until well combined.

TRANSFER the batter to the prepared pan and bake in the preheated oven until a crust has formed on top and the middle has just set, 45 to 50 minutes. Allow to cool in the pan. Dust with confectioners’ sugar just before serving.



STRUDEL DI MELE

APPLE STRUDEL

Makes one 12-inch (30-centimeter) strudel, 6 to 8 servings *Trentino–Alto Adige*

Though you may associate strudel more closely with Austria than with Italy, strudel in a puff pastry case is the signature dessert of the Trentino–Alto Adige region, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire until 1919.

DOUGH AND FINISHING

14 ounces (400 grams)
Pasta Sfoglia (page 52) or
2 sheets store-bought
puff pastry

1 large egg, lightly beaten

FILLING

½ cup (100 grams) sugar

3 tablespoons (43 grams)
unsalted butter

2 pounds (900 grams)
apples, peeled, cored, and
cut into ½-inch
(1¼-centimeter) dice

¾ cup (70 grams) coarse
breadcrumbs

2 Amaretti cookies (page
20 or store-bought), finely
crushed

Finely grated zest of
1 lemon

ON a piece of parchment paper, roll out homemade puff pastry to a rectangle about ¼ inch (½ centimeter) thick and about 14 × 18-inches (36 × 46-centimeters) wide, or overlap the sheets slightly, press gently to seal them together, and trim to the correct size. Use the parchment to slide the dough onto a baking sheet or jelly-roll pan and refrigerate.

PREHEAT the oven to 350°F (180°C).

FOR THE FILLING, in a large sauté pan, combine the sugar and butter. Bring the mixture to a low boil over medium heat and stir until the sugar dissolves, about 1 minute. Add the apples and cook, stirring to coat, about 2 minutes. Remove from the heat and add the breadcrumbs, cookie crumbs, and lemon zest; stir well to combine.

TRANSFER the chilled dough with the parchment to a work surface. Mound the filling in a 12 × 3-inch (30 × 8-centimeter) strip, about 2 inches (5 centimeters) up from the bottom edge of the dough, leaving a 2½-inch (6-centimeter) border of dough on either end of the filling at the short ends; brush the dough with the egg. (Reserve egg wash.) Fold in the two short ends of the dough to cover the filling. From the bottom edge, roll up the strudel using the parchment paper and ending with the strudel seam-side down. Roll onto a baking sheet. Brush the outside of the dough with the egg wash.

BAKE in the preheated oven, rotating the pan once half-way through, until the strudel is evenly golden in color, about 40 minutes. Remove the strudel from the oven and allow it to cool on the pan on the rack until just warm, at least 30 minutes.



FRITTELLE DI RICOTTA

RICOTTA FRITTERS

Makes 4 to 6 dozen fritters

Incorporating ricotta results in cloudlike fritters with a tender texture.

2 cups (500 grams) cow's milk ricotta, drained

½ cup (60 grams) sugar

3 large eggs

2 cups (200 grams) pastry flour

2 teaspoons (10 grams) baking powder

1 teaspoon (5 grams) salt

Vegetable oil for frying

Confectioners' sugar for sprinkling

IN a large bowl, combine the ricotta, sugar, and eggs. Sift the flour, baking powder, and salt together and then fold the dry ingredients into the ricotta mixture using a rubber spatula (or a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment). Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.

LINE a baking sheet with paper towels. Fill a Dutch oven or stockpot with several inches of oil. Clip a candy thermometer to the pot, and place over medium heat. Bring the oil to 325°F (165°C) and regulate the heat to keep it at that temperature as you fry the dough.

USE a very small gelato scoop to scoop the batter into balls about the size of a golf ball and drop them into the oil, working in batches to keep from crowding the pan. Fry the fritters until dark brown, 6 to 7 minutes. As they are ready, remove them with a slotted spoon or skimmer and transfer to the prepared baking sheet to drain briefly. Dust with confectioners' sugar and serve warm or at room temperature.

BABÀ AL RHUM

RUM BABAS

*Makes 1 dozen pastries**Campania*

Yeast-leavened babà are a specialty of Napoli. Serve a dollop of pastry cream or whipped cream (see pages 88–89) on top of each. At Eataly we make our babà in shaped molds, but you can use any type of ramekin or even a muffin tin with large indentations. These actually benefit from being made in advance—more soaking time translates into boozier babà. If you have active dry yeast rather than instant yeast on hand, dissolve it in a couple of tablespoons of warm water before adding.

CAKES

**3¾ cups (450 grams)
unbleached all-purpose
flour, plus more for pan**

½ cup (100 grams) sugar

**2¼ teaspoons (1 envelope/
7 grams) instant yeast**

8 large eggs

**2 sticks (230 grams)
unsalted butter, softened,
plus more for pan**

**2 teaspoons (10 grams)
salt**

SYRUP

1 cup (200 grams) sugar

**½ cup (120 milliliters)
dark rum**

BUTTER and flour a 12-cup muffin pan or 12 babà pans and set aside.

IN the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook, combine the flour, sugar, and yeast. Mix on low speed until incorporated.

RAISE the speed to medium and add the eggs one at a time, beating to incorporate between additions. When you have added all the eggs, beat the dough until thick and batter-like, about 10 minutes. Turn off the mixer and add 14 tablespoons (200 grams) of the softened butter and the salt. Beat on high speed until the dough pulls away from the sides of the bowl, about 10 minutes. The dough should be shiny and smooth.

REMOVE the dough from the mixing bowl. Butter your hands with the remaining 2 tablespoons (30 grams) softened butter. With buttered hands, divide the dough into 12 equal portions. (A kitchen scale is useful for this.) Place each portion in one of the indentations in the prepared muffin pan or one of the babà pans, cover loosely with a towel, and allow to stand at room temperature until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour.

PREHEAT the oven to 325°F (160°C). Bake the cakes in the preheated oven until they are cooked through and a toothpick inserted in the center emerges clean, 20 to 25 minutes. Cool in the pan on a rack for 20 minutes. Remove the cakes from the pan and place them on the rack set over a baking sheet or jelly-roll pan.

FOR the syrup, in a small saucepan, bring 1 cup (240 millimeters) water and sugar to a boil and stir to dissolve the sugar. Lower the heat to an active simmer and cook for 15 minutes to form a simple syrup. Remove from heat, add the rum, and stir to mix. Allow to cool for 5 minutes.

POKE the tops of the cakes with a popsicle stick to form 8 to 10 slits in each. Spoon the syrup over the cakes and into the slits. Collect any syrup that drips onto the pan and spoon it over the cakes again, then repeat a third time. Serve at room temperature.

