

Apple Tart

Serves 12 to 15

My grandmother supposedly adapted this open-faced apple tart from the German fashion magazine *Burda*, which was the first Western magazine to be translated into Russian and distributed in the Soviet Union. She also used the base of this tart to make an American flag tart every Fourth of July (instead of using the nuts and apples for filling, she would cover the tart with cream and then create stripes and stars out of cut strawberries and blueberries). So feel free to adjust this tart recipe to express whatever you need on the top.

DOUGH

2¼ cups (275 g) all-purpose flour

½ cup (100 g) powdered sugar

10 tablespoons (150 g) unsalted butter, softened

1 large egg

2 tablespoons sour cream

FILLING

2 pounds 3 ounces (1 kg) apples
(4 to 5 medium; see Notes)

Zest and juice of 1 lemon (about 3 tablespoons juice)

¾ cup (50 g) walnuts

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

2 teaspoons (10 ml) vanilla extract

Pinch ground cloves

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(recipe continues)

½ cup (120 ml) apricot or peach jam, or orange marmalade, warmed on the stovetop (see Notes)

¼ cup (60 ml) cognac

Vanilla ice cream or whipped cream (optional), for serving

MAKE THE DOUGH: Sift the flour into a bowl. Add the powdered sugar, butter, egg, and sour cream. Knead until the dough comes together and roll into a ball. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and let the dough chill for at least 2 hours in the fridge.

MEANWHILE, MAKE THE FILLING: Peel the apples, cut them into thin slices, and place them in a bowl. Pour the lemon juice over them and stir to coat the apples (reserve the lemon zest for the nuts). Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate the apples while the dough finishes chilling.

Run a rolling pin over the walnuts until they are broken up into small pieces. In a small bowl, toss the walnut pieces with the cinnamon, vanilla, ground cloves, and lemon zest. (You can use a whole vanilla bean in place of vanilla extract, just cut the bean in the half and scoop the insides directly into the nut mixture.)

After the dough is chilled, preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Roll the dough into a rectangle, about 15 x 10 in (38 x 25 cm) and about ½-inch (1 cm) thick. It may be difficult to roll the dough right out of the fridge, so either let the dough sit on the counter for 15 minutes or work it with your hands to warm it, then wind it around a rolling pin and lay it out on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Prick the dough in many places with a fork.

Sprinkle the surface of the dough evenly with the walnut mixture. Place the apple slices on top in overlapping rows, as tightly as possible, with just ½ inch (1 cm) of each apple slice showing underneath the next.

Bake until the edges of the crust start to brown, about 35 minutes.

Remove from the oven. While the apple tart is still warm, carefully spread a thin layer of the warm apricot jam on top, then flambé the cognac over the tart. You can do this by pouring the cognac into a ladle and carefully lighting the cognac with a match, then pouring the cognac generously and evenly over the tart. (Alternatively, if you don't want to flambé the cognac, you can warm it together with the apricot jam and spread the mixture on the tart.)

Before serving the tart, trim off the bare edges of the pastry crust, taking care not to cut into the apples on top. You can serve this tart hot or at room temperature and it's great with vanilla ice cream or whipped cream. It also stores well in the fridge for several days.

NOTES: I love making this tart in the fall with apples from the farmers market. When sourcing apples from your market, ask the farmers what apples they like to use for tarts and pies. They may sell interesting varieties you haven't tried before. I have made this with Honeycrisp, for their texture, and for those who love the most tart apples possible, try Granny Smiths. It's important to choose crisp, fresh apples.

Try to use mostly the liquid part of the jam versus the pieces of fruit, whether apricots or peaches, when making the tart, because the peaches are a little too big and may overpower the apples.

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Maria Geyman

Rizzoli New York

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