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Saffron and rhubarb tart with clotted cream

Serves 8 to 10

As far as I can remember the first recipe we tried for this dish came from a book called 'The art of the tart'. We adjusted it slightly and scaled it up for the café but I think it remains essentially the same.

If you can't find fresh rhubarb you can use frozen. If you have to buy more fresh rhubarb than you require don't worry because once it's cooked it freezes down well and keeps raw in the fridge for up to two weeks.



Rhubarb filling

800g (1½ lbs) fresh or frozen rhubarb

300g (11oz) sugar

Chop up the stems of rhubarb cutting off any leaves (if there are any) . Put it into a large pan with the sugar and place it over a medium heat. Cook, stirring regularly, until the rhubarb is soft and cooked through. If you think you need to add more sugar feel free to add more to taste. If you like things particularly bitter use less sugar. Allow the mixture to cool and use to place in the bottom of the cooked pastry.



Making the pastry

Sweet pastry

200g (1 cup) butter

450g (1lb) plain flour

100g (4oz) sugar

2 eggs and maybe a little water

Place the flour into a large bowl with the sugar. Add the butter and then rub it in the flour mix. Add the eggs and bring it together to a dough with a knife. If the dough doesn't quite come together add a little water. Wrap and store in the fridge for an hour or more. Follow the instructions below.



First of all roll out the pastry on a well floured surface. The recipe is more than enough for a 12 inch tin or 6 small tart tins. Roll it out so it is large enough to cover the tin base, the sides and a little bit of overlap. If you are not sure place the tin on the pastry to measure up.

Roll the pastry onto your floured rolling pin and carefully unroll it onto your greased tin. Allow the pastry to overlap the edges of the tin. You are going to trim the excess pastry off after it is baked.

Doing it this way means you won't have to use any baking beans. Tuck the pastry carefully into the corners of the tin and prick the base all over with a fork.

Place the pie case(s) in the oven for 15 minutes in the middle of the oven set at about 180°C (356°F). After 15 minutes check it. If it is still pale in colour cook it for another 5 to ten minutes until it is golden brown. The idea is to cook the pastry base all the way though without over cooking the edges.

When cooked remove from the oven and allow to cool. When cool proceed with the rest of the recipe.

For the filling

600ml (2 cups) whipping or double cream

large pinch of saffron

9 egg yolks

½ vanilla pod

300g (11oz) sugar

Place all of the ingredients into a large metal or glass bowl and whisk it all together. Put the bowl onto a pan of boiling water to form a 'bain marie' and start to cook the custard lightly whisking as you go. After ten to fifteen minutes the custard will thicken. Take it off the heat and pour it on top of the rhubarb.



Place the tart into an oven set to a medium temperature and bake for about twenty minutes. The custard should set firm. If it is still very wobbly in the middle by this time then cook it a little more until it is fairly firm all over.



Allow to cool and then trim off the excess pastry with a sharp knife. Serve straight from the fridge with a generous blob of clotted cream or whipped cream.