

CANTONESE EGG TARTS

What you need

Tart cases:

1 stick unsalted butter (115g), at room temperature
30g icing sugar
225g plain flour, sifted
1 egg
A few drops of vanilla extract

For the custard:

110g caster sugar
250ml/1 cup hot water
4 eggs
85ml evaporated milk
1/2tsp vanilla extract

Yields about 20 tarts

Preparation 10 minutes

Cooking 90 minutes

What to do

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C/395°F. Whip the butter and icing sugar until fluffy and smooth. Beat an egg and add it to the mixture. Sift the flour in two batches as you add it to the mixture. The mixture will be fairly crumbly.
2. Put some flour down on the kitchen bench and knead until you have a nice, pliable dough. Try not to overwork it once it's consolidated.
3. Roll the dough out with a rolling pin (or wine bottle) to approximately 4mm. Using a cookie cutter slightly larger than the foil cups, cut the dough into circles. Gently place the dough into each cup, making sure the dough is touching the bottom surface. Work your way around the sides, evening out any creases and gently pushing the edges up over the top.
4. Start the custard by dissolving the caster sugar in hot water. The water doesn't have to be boiling (about 80°C) and let it cool to prevent cooking the egg mixture. Break four eggs into a large bowl, and mix with evaporated milk and vanilla extract. Add the sugar water to the bowl and mix well.
5. Strain the egg mixture from the bowl into a pouring device (such a measuring cup with a spout) to remove any egg white or curdled bits. Fill them up about 1cm from the top as the custard later expands in the oven.

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6. Bake the tarts in the oven at 200°C/395°F for 10–15 minutes until the crust browns slightly. At this point, turn the oven down to 180°C and open the oven door slightly if the custard is starting to swell. This prevents them from cracking on the surface. Bake them with the door ajar for another 10–15 minutes until a toothpick can stand in the custard (you'll be able to see a difference in the surfaces that are cooked and those that are not).

Notes

This recipe is adapted from Christine's Recipes (<http://en.christinesrecipes.com>) and the recipe is very similar, other than the fact that I needed to make more of the custard mixture because my pastry was rolled out thinner, and I've reduced the amount of sugar in the pastry.

It's important that there are no breaks or tears in the dough cases, or the custard will spill out. Make sure the dough is pressed down to the bottom of the case, to ensure that it can hold the right amount of custard.