

Strawberry Cream-Cheese Tart

from In Our Grandmothers' Kitchens

Ingredients:

for the tart shell:

1/2 cup (1 stick) sweet butter, softened
1/3 cup granulated sugar
1-1/3 cups all-purpose flour
1/3 teaspoon salt
1 egg yolk
1 teaspoon vanilla

for the filling:

1 8-ounce package cream cheese, at room temperature
1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
1/4 cup key-lime juice

for the topping:

2 tablespoons cornstarch
1/2 cup sugar
1 pinch salt
2 tablespoons key-lime juice
4 tablespoons cold water
3-1/2 cups halved strawberries, divided

Instructions:

Begin with the crust. In a mixing bowl cream together the butter and the sugar until they are just blended. Add the flour and the salt, and stir until the mixture seems crumbly. (It will be dry.)

In a small bowl whisk together the egg yolk and the vanilla; drizzle this mixture over the flour mixture. Combine until the flour mixture is evenly moist; it will still be crumbly.

Grease a 9-inch tart pan. (You may use an 8-inch pie pan if you'd rather, but the tart is just beautiful.) Place the dough in the pan. Press it evenly over the bottom and up the sides of pan. Prick the bottom of the crust a bit to keep it from puffing up too much.

Put the crust in the freezer, uncovered, for 15 minutes while you preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Bake the crust for 15 to 20 minutes or until it is golden brown. Cool it completely before filling it.

To make the filling beat the cream cheese until it is soft and smooth; then beat in the condensed milk and the key-lime juice. Spoon this mixture over the cooled crust, and refrigerate for several hours before proceeding.

Finally, make the topping. In a heavy saucepan whisk together the cornstarch, the sugar, and the salt. Slowly whisk in the liquids. In a bowl, mash 1-1/2 cups of the berries. Add them to the cornstarch mixture. Let the mixture sit in the saucepan for 1 hour to juice up.

At the end of the hour bring the berry mixture to a boil, and boil it for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove it from the heat and let it sit until it reaches room temperature. Stir in the remaining uncooked berries.

Spoon the topping over the tart filling. Refrigerate the tart until you are ready to serve it. Garnish with additional strawberries and mint leaves if you wish. Serves 8.