

Strawberry and fennel tarts

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Frangipane is way easier to make than you might think. Get creative with other flavours for this tart: try mixing freshly grated ginger and white chocolate through the frangipane and topping with raspberries. We make our pastry in a food processor, which means you can have it wrapped up and in the fridge within minutes. Don't stress if you haven't got one, though, just go old school. Use your fingertips and work quickly, or the heat from your hands will melt the butter. Adding ingredients to a base pastry recipe is a great way of adding extra texture and flavour. Try using flaxseeds, oats, lime zest, chia seeds or even a little squid ink - whatever takes your fancy.

(serves 6)

- 1 tsp [fennel seeds](#), toasted
- 200 g [strawberries](#), hulled and sliced

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- 3 sprigs of lemon thyme, leaves picked
- Cream or crème fraîche, to serve
- 1 tbsp fennel flowers (optional)

Mandarin and poppy seed pastry

- 200 g plain flour, chilled
- 50 g icing sugar
- ½ pinch of salt flakes
- 100 g unsalted butter, diced and chilled
- Finely grated zest of ½ mandarin
- 1 tsp poppy seeds
- 1 egg, whisked

Frangipane

- 200 g unsalted butter, softened
- 200 g caster sugar
- 1 vanilla pod, split lengthways, seeds scraped
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten with a fork
- 250 g [almond meal](#)

Method

To make the pastry by hand, add the flour, sugar and salt to a large bowl and combine. Add the butter and work with your fingertips until it resembles breadcrumbs. Add the mandarin zest and poppy seeds and quickly combine. Add enough of the whisked egg to just bring the mix together (you'll probably only need about half). Gently knead a couple of times until smooth. Flatten out roughly, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 20 minutes before using.

To make the pastry in a food processor, simply follow the same steps, pulsing until it just reaches each stage without overworking, and then knead and rest as normal.

Preheat the oven to 180°C fan-forced (200°C conventional).

Roll out the pastry on a floured surface until 3 to 4 mm thick. Cut out circles to line six individual 9 cm tart tins, or one large 25 cm loose-based flan tin.

When lining the tins, make sure the pastry is pressed right into the corners.

Add a pinch of fennel seeds to the base of each tart and press the seeds into the pastry. Trim the pastry, leaving 4 to 5 mm overhang to allow for shrinkage, and rest in the fridge for 30 minutes.

Once rested, line the tarts with baking paper and fill with rice or baking weights. Bake for 15 minutes. Remove the paper and rice and cook for another 5 minutes. Set aside to cool before filling.

Turn the oven down to 160°C fan-forced (180°C conventional).

For the frangipane, beat the butter, sugar and vanilla seeds until pale and fluffy, scraping down the sides of the bowl a couple of times as you go.

Slowly add the eggs to the mix while beating. Once incorporated, switch off the mixer and fold in the almond meal by hand.

Spoon the frangipane mix into the tart shells, top with the strawberries, remaining fennel seeds and a little lemon thyme. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes for individual tarts, or 30 to 35 minutes for a large tart. Once cooked, the frangipane will spring back slightly to the touch. Trim any excess pastry and

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serve with cream or crème fraîche and fennel flowers if you can find some!

Recipe by [Mark LaBrooy](#).

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