

LEARN MORE

As with all baking, but especially in pastry, ***mise en place*** is crucial to success. French for “everything in its place,” the term refers to having all your ingredients measured out and ready to go so once you start making a component, you don’t have to stop, which makes the whole process that much more relaxed.

For the tart shell, tough dough—which can come from over-mixing, gluten content, and not letting it rest—is the enemy. So you want to add all the dry ingredients at the end of mixing, even finishing mixing by hand if necessary, to ensure the dough is handled only long enough to incorporate the dry ingredients. This will produce a light and crisp pastry base for your delicate fruit tart.

When it comes to making your pastry cream, feel free to flavor it with whatever ***complementary flavors*** you like. For the strawberry tart, Chef Dominique sticks to traditional vanilla, but for the apple tart, he infuses the milk for the cream with a cinnamon stick to extract its flavor. As you will see once it begins to cook, a lot of foam will form on top of the pastry cream mixture. This is a result of all the whisking to combine the ingredients. Once you see it start to disappear as the pastry cream cooks, you can take it as a sign that the cream has started to thicken and will be ready shortly.

Constant and consistent whisking is imperative for making a silky smooth pastry cream, as it prevents cream from sticking to the bottom of the pot and becoming overcooked. A common misstep in making pastry cream is to add the butter to the hot cream as soon as it’s done. You want to avoid this because it will break the emulsion of the butter and result in a

grainy, greasy pastry cream. Instead, allow the pastry cream to cool to a degree that is just slightly warmer than room temperature before incorporating the butter. That way, the two mixtures blend together smoothly and your pastry cream stays velvety and light. And once the pastry cream is finished, make sure to press the plastic wrap against the surface of the cream so that it does not form a “skin” or firm layer on top, another enemy of the smooth texture you want in your pastry cream.

When making the ***jam for the tart***, do not use fruit that is going bad, but rather fruit that is at its peak of ripeness to ensure the most vibrant flavor. When incorporating the pectin into the fruit, it’s essential to mix it with the sugar first and also slowly sprinkle it into the hot fruit purée while whisking constantly. Both steps ensure the jam stays smooth, avoiding any hard lumps that could ruin the texture of your tart. Other jam-like condiments, like compotes or preserves, often have large chunks of fruit in them—great on your morning toast, but not ideal for a sleek, modern tart filling—which would compete for attention with the beautiful fruit on top of the tart.

For both tarts, pick the ***best looking and tasting fruits*** you can get since those will be on full display with nothing to hide any imperfections. In the strawberry tart, look for berries that are uniform in size. When placing them on the top of the tart, start with larger berries at the perimeter of the tart and use smaller berries as you work your way toward the center. For the apple tart, use a mandoline to cut thin, uniform slices of apple, if your knife skills are not expert-level. To use the most you can from the apple, cut off its “cheeks” in thirds from the core of

FRUIT TART

the apple so you have three even lobes to work with. With the apples, vary the colors slightly so you can produce an ombre effect when fanning out the slices over the top of the tart.

As for the glaze, it should just “**drape the fruit,**” as Chef Dominique notes. “Like applying fingernail polish, you want to start from one end and move toward you in one clean motion.” If your glaze is too hot, it can damage the fruit. If it is too cooled and thickened, it will just sit on top like a jelly and will be unpleasant to look at it. Always make sure the glaze is no warmer than room temperature so you know it’s the proper consistency.