



CHAPTER 04-08

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## FRUIT TART

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MASTERCLASS

## FRUIT TART



**“In the bakery, I compare my pastries to a silent film, in that they must be impactful right away. As soon as you look at it, it has to look good and attractive; you must be seduced by it.”**

For Chef Dominique, presentation is one of the most important elements in making pastries—but especially in fruit tarts, where you want to take advantage of the fruit’s beauty to make your tarts look spectacular. In a restaurant, you have a server to explain a dessert to you, but in a bakery like Chef Dominique’s, the tart must present itself.

In this chapter, Chef Dominique will take you through the essential components of building a traditional French fruit tart with modern sensibility and presentation. First, you will learn to make the pastry shell, the foundation of your tart. For these fruit tarts, Chef Dominique will teach you how to blind-bake a tart,

which involves baking the dough fully by itself (weighted to keep its shape) so that it can be served with unbaked fillings, like pastry cream and fruit. That pastry cream will be the filling for the tart, a creamy conduit for marrying the pastry crust, fruit, and jam, the last of which is used to add pops of intense fruit flavor. Finally, you will learn to make a clear glaze, also called a nappage, which helps seal in the moisture of your fruits on top, preventing them from drying out, oxidizing, and looking unpleasant.

This final step is presentation. For Chef Dominique, the face of a tart is a canvas for inspired artistry. From the moment you conceive of and begin to create your desserts, always keep in mind what you want the finished product to look like. It should, as Chef Dominique notes frequently, be as beautiful to behold as it is delicious to taste. By tackling each step of the recipe one at a time, you will learn the meaning behind each element, the various ways ingredients can affect the flavor of the finished tart, and how to assemble components in a way that creates a stunning pastry to show off to all your friends and family.

### Baking Timeline



## FRUIT TART BASE: VANILLA SABLÉ SHELL



**Makes:** 1 8-inch tart shell

**Time:** 1 hour (including baking time)

### INGREDIENTS

81g ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup + 2 tbsp) confectioners' sugar  
127g (9 tbsp) unsalted premium butter, softened  
(plus more to butter your tart ring)  
50g (1 each) large egg  
1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise,  
seeds scraped  
186g ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cups) all-purpose flour  
(plus more as needed for dusting)  
47g ( $\frac{1}{3}$  cup + 1 tbsp) cornstarch  
1g ( $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp) kosher salt

### EQUIPMENT

Stand mixer fitted with paddle attachment  
Rubber spatula  
Rolling pin  
Sheet pan  
Parchment paper  
8-inch tart ring  
Small paring knife

### METHOD

In a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, cream the confectioners' sugar and butter for 30 seconds on low speed. Add the egg, scrape down the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula, and mix on medium speed until evenly combined.

Working on a cutting board, press the vanilla bean flat, then use the tip of the paring knife to halve it lengthwise, from tip to tip. Turn the knife blade over and use the back of the blade tip to scrape the seeds from the center of each half.

In a medium bowl, combine the flour, cornstarch, and salt. With the mixer on low speed, stir in the flour mixture and vanilla bean seeds until just combined and no more dry patches are visible, about 10 seconds more. Finish mixing the dough by hand to ensure it is not over-mixed. The dough should be creamy, smooth and have the consistency of cookie dough.

Transfer the dough to a sheet of parchment paper on your work surface and sandwich it with another sheet of parchment paper, flattening it into a 1-inch-thick disk. Transfer the dough disk to a sheet pan and refrigerate until firm, 30 to 45 minutes.

## FRUIT TART BASE: VANILLA SABLÉ SHELL

Liberally flour the work surface and a rolling pin. Unwrap the dough and transfer it to your work surface. Roll out the dough out into a rectangle about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch (3mm) thick. (Make sure to work fast so the dough doesn't get too warm.) Place on a sheet pan and loosely cover with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for 30 minutes. (If you feel your dough is still cold and easy to work with, you can proceed directly to the next step without chilling the dough sheet.)

*Tip: You can also roll out the dough between two sheets of parchment, if you find that your rolling pin is sticking to the dough. It also helps when transferring the rolled out dough onto the sheet pan before chilling in the fridge.*

Remove the dough from the refrigerator and slide the dough sheet to a work surface. (Peel off the layers of parchment paper, if using.) Using the tart ring as a guide, cut a circle from the center of the dough sheet that is 1 inch (2.5 cm) wider than the outside of the ring, so that the dough round will be big enough to come up the sides of the ring.

Now: the fun part. You're going to "fonçage" the tart dough, or form it into a tart shape in the tart ring. First, butter the inside of the tart ring. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper and place the tart ring at the center of the pan. Place the dough round on top of the ring. Push down gently with your fingers and press the dough along the inside of the ring, making sure to get into the inside edges. It's important here not to press too hard and to keep the tart shell an even thickness so that it doesn't bake unevenly. Use a paring knife to trim the excess dough hanging over the edge of the ring. Return to the refrigerator to chill for about 30 minutes.

*Tip: If your dough starts to feel warm and lose its shape, return it to the fridge for 15 minutes. Chilling the dough allows the gluten to rest. Working with dough that's too warm or overworked will cause the finished product to shrink while baking.*

While the tart shell is chilling, place a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C) for conventional or 325°F (160°C) for convection.

Blind-bake the tart shell by lining it with parchment paper or a large coffee filter so the surface of the dough is completely covered. An easy trick to folding the parchment is similar to folding a snowflake, where you fold it in quarters and keep folding smaller segments to the point, cutting in a curve to form a circle. Press the parchment completely to the side of the tart dough.

*Tip: Since tarts are filled with creams or mousses (which can't be baked), you'll have to bake the tart shell in advance of filling it.*

Fill with enough rice or dried beans to hold down as weights. Bake the tart on the center rack for 15 to 20 minutes, until it's a light golden, sandy color and you don't see any wet spots.

*Tip: This particular tart dough won't rise too much, so if you don't blind-bake the tart shell in advance, it's still going to be ok.*

*Tip: Some tart or pie shell recipes will tell you to "dock" (or pierce with a fork) the bottom of the dough before baking to prevent it from puffing up. You DON'T need to dock this dough as it won't rise too much, especially as it's being weighed down with pie weights during the blind-baking process.*

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Bake the tart shell on the center rack for 8 minutes. Rotate the pan 180 degrees and bake for 8 more minutes or until the tart shell is a light golden brown. Unmold the tart shell while still warm. Let cool completely at room temperature.

*Tip: Always make sure your tart shell is fully cooled before you start assembling any cream-based tarts. If the shell is still too hot or warm when you pipe in your pastry cream, you'll end up with a soggy-bottomed tart.*

### STORAGE

Best enjoyed fresh the day-of. Tart shells can be baked in advance, but don't fill them with your creams and fillings too far in advance. Ideally, it's filled and served right away, so the shell stays nice and crispy.

Any excess dough can be frozen, covered tightly in plastic wrap and stored in an airtight container, for 2 to 3 weeks. It can also be refrigerated, wrapped in plastic wrap and stored in an airtight container, for 2 to 3 days.