



French Apple Tart

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 15: Classic Fare with Flair

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

A classic French apple tart is little more than apples and pastry, but such simplicity means that imperfections like tough or mushy apples, unbalanced flavor, and sodden crust are hard to hide. In our recipe a quick and buttery pat-in-pan dough bakes to a shortbread-like texture that gives the tart a sturdy base. For intense fruit flavor, we pack the tart with a whopping 5 pounds of Golden Delicious apples. We cook half into a concentrated puree, which is made more luxurious with butter and apricot preserves, and we slice and parcook the remaining apples and use them to adorn the top with concentric circles. A thin coat of preserves and a final run under the broiler provide an attractively caramelized finish and a distinctively European flair.

Serves 8

You may have extra apple slices after arranging the apples in step 6. If you don't have a potato masher, you can puree the apples in a food processor. For the best flavor and texture, be sure to bake the crust thoroughly until it is deep golden brown. To ensure that the outer ring of the pan releases easily from the tart, avoid getting apple puree and apricot glaze on the crust. The tart is best served the day it is assembled.

INGREDIENTS

Crust

- 1 1/3** cups (6 2/3 ounces) all-purpose flour
- 5** tablespoons (2 1/4 ounces) sugar
- 1/2** teaspoon salt
- 10** tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

Filling

- 10** Golden Delicious apples (8 ounces each), peeled and cored
- 3** tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1** tablespoon water
- 1/2** cup apricot preserves
- 1/4** teaspoon salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. FOR THE CRUST: Adjust 1 oven rack to lowest position and second rack 5 to 6 inches from broiler element. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Whisk flour, sugar, and salt together in bowl. Add melted butter and stir with wooden spoon until dough forms. Using your hands, press two-thirds of dough into bottom of 9-inch tart pan with removable bottom. Press remaining dough into fluted sides of pan. Press and smooth dough with your hands to even thickness. Place pan on wire rack set in rimmed baking sheet and bake on lowest rack, until crust is deep golden brown and firm to touch, 30 to 35 minutes, rotating pan halfway through baking. Set aside until ready to fill.

- 2. FOR THE FILLING:** Cut 5 apples lengthwise into quarters and cut each quarter lengthwise into 4 slices. Melt 1 tablespoon butter in 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add apple slices and water and toss to combine. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until apples begin to turn translucent and are slightly pliable, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer apples to large plate, spread into single layer, and set aside to cool. Do not clean skillet.
- 3.** While apples cook, microwave apricot preserves until fluid, about 30 seconds. Strain preserves through fine-mesh strainer into small bowl, reserving solids. Set aside 3 tablespoons strained preserves for brushing tart.
- 4.** Cut remaining 5 apples into 1/2-inch-thick wedges. Melt remaining 2 tablespoons butter in now-empty skillet over medium heat. Add remaining apricot preserves, reserved apricot solids, apple wedges, and salt. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until apples are very soft, about 10 minutes.
- 5.** Mash apples to puree with potato masher. Continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until puree is reduced to 2 cups, about 5 minutes.
- 6.** Transfer apple puree to baked tart shell and smooth surface. Select 5 thinnest slices of sautéed apple and set aside. Starting at outer edge of tart, arrange remaining slices, tightly overlapping, in concentric circles. Bend reserved slices to fit in center. Bake tart, still on wire rack in sheet, on lowest rack, for 30 minutes. Remove tart from oven and heat broiler.
- 7.** While broiler heats, warm reserved preserves in microwave until fluid, about 20 seconds. Brush evenly over surface of apples, avoiding tart crust. Broil tart, checking every 30 seconds and turning as necessary, until apples are attractively caramelized, 1 to 3 minutes. Let tart cool for at least 1 1/2 hours. Remove outer metal ring of tart pan, slide thin metal spatula between tart and pan bottom, and carefully slide tart onto serving platter. Cut into wedges and serve.
- TO MAKE AHEAD:** The baked crust, apple slices, and apple puree can be made up to 24 hours in advance. Apple slices and apple puree should be refrigerated separately in airtight containers. Assemble tart with refrigerated apple slices and puree and bake as directed, adding 5 minutes to baking time.

TECHNIQUE

FOR THE EASIEST-EVER TART DOUGH, MELT THE BUTTER

Traditional French pastry crusts that call for cold butter require a series of chilling, resting, and rolling steps to ensure that the dough doesn't shrink or slump during baking. For our modified *pâte sucrée*, we use melted butter, which allows us to skip the fussy prebaking steps—and offers a couple of other benefits, too.

First, melted butter thoroughly coats the flour proteins, preventing them from linking up and forming the elastic network known as gluten that causes dough to retract during baking. The fat also “waterproofs” the dough by coating the flour's starch granules, preventing them from absorbing moisture from the tart filling. Finally, melted butter makes this dough not only easy to throw together—just pour the butter over the dry ingredients and stir—but also so malleable when raw that it can simply be pressed into the pan rather than rolled out. Best of all: This dough will work for any sweet tart recipe.

DOUGH IN SECONDS: Pour melted butter over the flour mixture and stir.



CRUST IN A MINUTE: Just press it into the pan—no rolling necessary.



TECHNIQUE

OUR APPLE TART: FRENCH FINESSE WITHOUT THE FUSS

Traditional *tarte aux pommes* looks impressive when whole, but is fussy to make and often falls apart when cut. Our version is easier to make, slices neatly, and boasts all the elegance of the original.



STURDY CRUST: Pastry made with melted (rather than cold) butter bakes up with a fine, crisp crumb and resists turning soggy.

BRIGHT-TASTING GLAZE: Brushing strained apricot preserves over the top of the tart adds an extra burst of fruit flavor and a glossy sheen.

TENDER APPLE SLICES: Parcooking the sliced apples in a skillet makes them pliable enough to bend into place—and just soft enough to slice through once baked.

CONCENTRATED PUREE: Apricot jam added to the apple puree brightens flavor, while butter contributes richness.

TECHNIQUE

MAKING A ROSETTE

Briefly precooking the apple slices makes them pliable and easy to arrange in a rosette on top of the puree.

1. Gently cook the sliced apples with a little butter and water until just softened and translucent.



2. Arrange most of the slices in tightly overlapping concentric circles.



3. Bend the remaining slices to fit in the center.

