

Salt and Serenity

Blood Orange Meringue Tart

Makes two 13½ x 4-inch tarts. An instant read thermometer is highly recommended for this recipe as several of the stages must be cooked to exact temperatures for success.

The curd and tart dough can be prepared a day ahead. Fill tarts and make meringue topping just before serving, or else the tart dough will become soggy.

Orange Curd recipe adapted from Rose Levy Beranbaum's recipe for Classic Lemon Curd in her book *"Pie and Pastry Bible."* Tart dough recipe is from Jim Dodge's classic book *"The American Baker."* Swiss Meringue recipe is from Stella Parks at seriouseats.com.

Blood Orange Curd:

1½ Tablespoons blood orange zest
2 cups blood orange juice (from about 12 blood oranges, depending on size)
10 egg yolks (1½ cup)
1 cup granulated sugar
1 stick (4 ounces) unsalted butter
½ teaspoon kosher salt

Tart Dough:

2½ cups cake and pastry flour
1 cup icing sugar
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
1½ sticks (6 ounces) butter, cut into ½ inch pieces and chilled
1 egg, beaten
1 tablespoon milk

Swiss Meringue:

2/3 cup egg whites (6 ounces), from 5 to 6 large eggs
1¼ cups plus 1 tablespoon granulated sugar (9 ounces)
¼ teaspoon Diamond Crystal kosher salt; use half as much if iodized
¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
½ teaspoon vanilla bean paste

1. **Make Curd:** Place 2 cups of blood orange juice into a large microwave safe container (with a capacity of at least 8 cups). Microwave on high for 10-15 minutes, until juice is reduced to 1 cup. All microwaves vary in power, so check periodically to make sure it does not over-reduce or boil over.
2. In a heavy non-reactive saucepan (I used my Le Creuset), whisk yolks and sugar together until thoroughly blended. Add concentrated blood orange juice, butter and salt and place over medium heat. Stir mixture with a heatproof rubber spatula
3. Continue to stir constantly and keep mixture at a very gentle simmer. Do not allow the mixture to boil or it will curdle. Continue to stir and cook over medium-low heat for about 20 minutes. Listen to a podcast or some music and be patient. It will thicken. Use an instant read thermometer to check the temperature after about 15 minutes. You want to cook the mixture to 175°F. When it is done, it will thickly coat the back of your spatula.
4. Strain the curd through a fine mesh strainer set over a bowl. Stir in orange zest. Allow to cool and then cover and refrigerate until needed. Curd will keep in the fridge for several days.
5. **Make tart dough:** Using the paddle attachment on an electric mixer, on low speed, mix together

flour, sugar, salt and butter for about 2 minutes, until it resembles a coarse meal. Add egg and milk and mix just until dough comes together.

6. Remove dough from mixer and divide it in half. Roll each piece of dough between 2 sheets of parchment paper to 17x7 inch rectangle. Chill dough in fridge for at least 30 minutes. Remove one sheet of dough from fridge and press into 4x13 inch rectangular pan. Trim off excess dough. Prick bottom of each tart with a fork a few times. Line tart shells with parchment paper or foil and then fill with pie weights or dried beans. Place tarts on baking sheet and freeze for 30 minutes.
7. Preheat oven to 350°F. Bake tarts for 20 minutes. Remove from oven and remove pie weights. Return tarts to oven and bake for another 15 minutes, until tarts are light golden brown. Remove from oven and let cool. Repeat with second sheet of dough.
8. Fill a wide pot with at least 2 inches of water. Place over high heat until steaming-hot, then adjust temperature to maintain a gentle simmer. Wipe the bowl and whisk attachment of your stand mixer with lemon juice or white vinegar to ensure they are totally clean and grease free. Rinse with hot water and dry well.
9. Combine egg whites, sugar, salt, cream of tartar, and vanilla bean paste in the just cleaned mixer bowl. Set bowl over steaming water, making sure water does not touch the bottom of the bowl. Stir and scrape sides of bowl constantly with a flexible spatula, until egg whites hold steady at 175°F (79°C), between 8 and 10 minutes. Transfer to a stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment and whip at high speed until meringue is glossy and beginning to ball up inside the whisk, about 5 minutes.
10. Transfer meringue to a disposable piping bag fitted with a French star tip (Ateco #869 is a good size).
11. Whisk cooled blood orange curd to ensure there are no lumps. Fill both tart shells with the curd and smooth tops with an offset spatula. Pipe decorative stars onto each tart. If you happen to have a blowtorch, or mini culinary torch on hand, feel free to torch the meringue. Serve immediately.