

Salt and Serenity

Poppyseed Lemon Curd Tarts

Bake these lemon tarts for the lemon lover in your life. The balance of flavours and textures in these tarts are what make them so special. The crust is slightly sweet, almost cookie-like, with the crunch of poppyseeds. The lemon curd is a bit unusual in that it is finished in the blender, turning it into a billowing silky lemon cream. The sweet meringue topping balances the ultra-tart lemon cream.

Equipment needed: Instant read thermometer, candy thermometer, [six 4-inch tart pans with removable bottoms](#), fine mesh strainer, blender or food processor, disposable piping bag and decorative piping tip (I used a [French star tip - Ateco #864](#) and [St Honore tip - Ateco 880](#))

Lemon curd recipe from Lynne Rossetto Kasper of [thesplendidtable.com](#)

Tart dough recipe adapted from Jim Dodge's book, *The American Baker*.

The method for shaping the tarts comes from Maury Rubin at *Saveur Magazine*.

Italian Meringue recipe from Shirley O Corriher's book, *BakeWise*.

Make ahead tips: The curd and tart shells can be made several days ahead. Store curd in fridge and shells in an airtight container at room temperature. The filled tarts are best served the day they are made but leftovers will keep well, refrigerated, for 1-2 days.

Makes six 4-inch tarts

Lemon Curd:

198 grams (1 cup) sugar

Finely grated zest of 3 lemons

4 large eggs

¼ teaspoon Diamond Crystal Kosher salt

210 grams (¾ cup, plus 2 tablespoons) freshly squeezed lemon juice (4 to 5 lemons), with pits removed

282 grams (2½ sticks) unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces, softened

Tart Shells:

338 grams (2½ cups) all-purpose flour

113 grams (1 cup) confectioners (icing) sugar

¼ teaspoon Diamond Crystal Kosher salt

170 grams (¾ cup) unsalted butter, cut into ½ inch pieces and chilled

1 large egg

2 tablespoons milk

Italian Meringue:

4 grams (1½ teaspoons) cornstarch

40 grams (3 Tablespoons) cool water

85 grams egg whites (from about 3 large eggs)

2 grams (½ teaspoon) cream of tartar

25 grams (⅛ cup) sugar

173 grams (¾ cup plus 2½ tablespoons) sugar

10 grams (1½ teaspoons) light corn syrup

57 grams (¼ cup) water

3 grams (½ teaspoon) vanilla extract

⅛ teaspoon Diamond Crystal Kosher salt

Make lemon curd: Fill a 6-quart pot with 2 inches of water. Set it over medium heat and bring the water to a simmer. Place the sugar and lemon zest in a large stainless-steel bowl (about 8 quarts) that can be fitted into the pan without touching the water (pour some off if necessary). Off the heat, rub the sugar and zest together until sugar is moist, grainy, and very aromatic (about 3 minutes). Whisk in the eggs and then the lemon juice.

Fit the bowl atop the pan of water (make sure it's simmering not boiling). Cook, stirring with a whisk, until the curd thickens and reaches 180°F. on an instant-reading thermometer. The whole process could take 10 minutes. The stainless-steel bowl will get quite hot. Wear an oven mitt on the hand that is steadying the bowl as you whisk.

As you cook the curd, whisking constantly, you'll see that first the curd is light and foamy, then the bubbles get larger, and finally, as the curd starts to thicken, the whisk leaves tracks. The curd is close to done. Keep whisking and checking the temperature.

Once it reaches 180°F, immediately scrape the curd into the strainer and strain it into the container of a blender or food processor. Let sit at room temperature until it reaches 140°F. (About 10-15 minutes).

With blender or food processor at high speed, add butter, several pieces at a time. Scrape down sides as you go. Once all the butter is used, blend for 4 minutes, pausing if needed. Refrigerate the lemon curd for several hours to four days before filling the tarts.

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.

Turn out the dough and shape it into a ball, then flatten the ball slightly into a disk. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm, about 2 hours or up to 1 day. Dust a work surface with flour. Cut the chilled dough into 1-inch pieces; using the heel of your hand, knead the pieces back together into a smooth disk. Keeping the surface well-floured, shape the disk into a 12-inch-long log. Cut into 6 equal pieces. Refrigerate 10 minutes.

Remove one of the dough pieces and transfer back to the well-floured work surface. Using your fist, squish the dough into a disk, then roll using a rolling pin to form a very thin (1/8-inch) round. Center the round over a 4-inch fluted tart pan, preferably with a removable bottom, or a tart ring. Run your fingers around the inside of the pan or ring several times, easing the dough into the edges to avoid tearing. Be sure the dough fits against all the sides and nooks of the pan. Trim excess dough from the top edges. Dock the bottom of the dough sparingly with the tines of a fork. 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.

Preheat oven to 373°F. Bake tarts for 20 minutes. Remove from oven and remove foil or parchment and pie weights. Return tarts to oven and bake for another 10-15 minutes, until tarts are golden brown. Remove from oven and let cool in their pans completely.

Make Italian Meringue: In a small saucepan heat cornstarch and 3 tablespoons cool water over medium heat, stirring steadily with a whisk until thick and cloudy. Set aside.

In a stand mixer with whisk attachment, beat egg whites and cream of tartar until soft peaks form when the beater is lifted. Add in 25 grams sugar and continue to beat.

In a heavy saucepan (I love using my Le Creuset pot for this), stir together 173 grams sugar, corn syrup and 1/4 cup water. Bring to a boil, and rinse down sides of the pan with a pastry brush dipped in water. Attach a candy thermometer to the saucepan and continue to boil the syrup until it reaches 248°F (hard ball stage).

Continue beating egg whites until stiff peaks form. Rinse a 2 cup Pyrex measuring cup with spout with hot tap water and dry well. When the syrup reaches 248°F, carefully pour it into measuring cup. Drizzle the hot sugar syrup into the meringue while beating on medium speed. Try to avoid drizzling syrup on beaters or side of bowl. Beat until meringue has cooled. This will take 10-12 minutes. Beat in vanilla, salt, and reserved cornstarch mixture.

Fill tart shells with lemon curd. Transfer meringue to pastry bag fitted with decorative tip. In the photos on my blog I used a [St Honore tip - Ateco 880](#) to make the ruffled design, and a [French star tip -Ateco #864](#) for the stars. Pipe meringue onto tarts. You can brown the meringue with a kitchen torch if you have one, or just put the piped tarts under the broiler for a few minutes.