MASTERING TARTS
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Make sweet tarts like a pro with our first ever Academy course. We'll be kicking things off by looking at the basics of making sweet pastry from scratch, how to line tart tins for that perfect finish and why blind baking can make all the difference. After that, the focus will shift to what actually goes into the tart – the filling. Starting off with a simple frangipane, we'll then move onto a silky-smooth crème brûlée before finishing with a more challenging showstopper: the best-ever clementine curd.

Each guide comes with plenty of helpful tips, tricks and advice, and we'll also be sharing recipes that make use of each of the fillings, throwing in some extra flavours along the way.

To help us with all this we've enlisted the help of pastry maestro Graham Hornigold, whose expert skills have been refined in some of the best restaurants in London. Previously executive pastry chef of the entire Hakkasan Group, he brings a delicate, refreshing touch to his desserts and has trained legions of pastry chefs around the world in the art of beautiful pâtisserie.

Take a look at our guides below, check out the accompanying recipes and watch the instructional videos for a full masterclass in making tarts. You'll never have to worry about what to serve for dessert ever again.
THE BASICS OF PASTRY

HOW TO MAKE SWEET PASTRY

This sweet pastry recipe will quickly become your go-to method for any sweet tart. Sweet pastry (or pâté sucrée) differs from a traditional shortcrust in that the softened butter is creamed with sugar before adding eggs and flour. This may seem counterintuitive, especially if you’re used to making shortcrust which sees fridge-cold butter gently combined with flour to form a breadcrumb-like mixture. However, the crumbly nature of shortcrust can make it tricky to work with, which can cause problems when lining a tart tin. Sweet pastry avoids this issue because the creaming of butter and sugar at the beginning allows air to be incorporated, creating a nice light texture that is also slightly easier to work with than standard shortcrust.

As with any pastry, chilling it in the fridge before rolling it out is key – the longer the better. Resting overnight will minimise shrinkage during baking the most, but if you’re short on time just make sure it’s in the fridge long enough to firm up properly and become nicely chilled (at least 30–60 minutes).

SWEET PASTRY

| 200g unsalted butter, soft | 1. Cream together the butter and sugar very lightly – do not overmix, or you will add too much air to the pastry. |
| 160g icing sugar, sifted | 2. Gradually add the eggs, mixing well between each addition. Make sure you scrape down the sides of the bowl so that all the ingredients are uniformly mixed. |
| 80g whole eggs | 3. Add the flour and salt and mix until you have a combined dough. Flatten out slightly then wrap in cling film and rest in the fridge for at least 30 minutes before rolling. |
| 400g plain flour |  |
THE BASICS OF PASTRY
HOW TO LINE A TART TIN

Once you’ve made your pastry and allowed it to chill, rest and firm up, it’s time to roll it out and get it into your tart tin (or pastry ring). This can be the step that worries bakers the most – tears in the pastry or uneven rolling can result in holes for your beautiful filling to leak out of. But by following a few simple rules, you’ll quickly find that it’s a simple process which, after a few attempts, you’ll be able to do perfectly again and again. And if your pastry does crack or tear, don’t worry; it may feel like a disaster, but you should barely notice any patching up in the final tart – it’s a surprisingly forgiving process.

1. Scatter a light dusting of flour on your work surface, remove the pastry from the fridge and roll out to a thickness of 3–4mm, rotating regularly to ensure the pastry does not shrink in an uneven fashion.

2. Trim the pastry into a disc slightly larger than the tart tin, taking care not to over-trim which may require tricky patching up. This will make it easier to line the case and minimise the risk of tearing.

3. Spray your tart tin with baking spray, then very lightly dust with an even layer of flour.

4. Pick up the pastry (using a rolling pin if the pastry is a bit delicate) and drape over the tart tin. Gently mould the pastry into the tin.
THE BASICS OF PASTRY

HOW TO LINE A TART TIN

5.

Roll some of the pastry trimmings into a ball and use to gently press around the edges of the tart base for a nice even finish. Make sure the pastry is flush against the case all the way around.

6.

Run a knife around the edge of the tart tin to cut away any excess pastry. Place in the fridge for at least 1 hour to chill.
THE BASICS OF PASTRY
HOW AND WHEN TO BLIND-BAKE A TART CASE

If your tart filling is quite solid, thick and not liable to spring any leaks, you can go ahead and fill your raw pastry case right away, as Graham does with his frangipane tart. For wetter tart fillings, you will need to 'blind-bake' first. Blind-baking partially cooks and strengthens the case, ensuring you have a nice pastry that is properly cooked through before the filling goes in.

Once your pastry is blind-baked, brushing it in egg wash and popping it back into the oven for a few minutes adds another layer of protection, creating a watertight seal and preventing any liquid filling from leaking out during baking. If any cracks appear after blind-baking, feel free to patch them up and return to the oven, or go to work with the egg wash to seal up any cracks and bind the pastry back together.

For lessons two and three, you’ll need to blind-bake your tart cases beforehand as they use liquid fillings.

1. Preheat the oven to 210°C/gas mark 7.

2. When the pastry case has chilled, prepare a blind-baking mixture. You can use baking beads, rice or even flour for this. Line the tart base with heatproof cling film, leaving plenty overhanging the edges of the tart. Fill the tart with baking beads, rice or flour, and gently bring the overhanging cling film over the top to encase the filling.

3. Blind bake the tart case until the edges start to turn a light brown colour. Turn the oven down to 195°C/gas mark 5 and cook for a further 15 minutes, until the case is a nice rich golden colour.

4. Remove the tart case from the oven then lift out the cling film and blind-baking mixture. Lightly brush the pastry all over with beaten egg yolk and return to the oven for 2 more minutes to seal – this stops the filling soaking into the pastry during cooking.

5. Remove from the oven and allow to cool completely before filling.
MASTERING TARTS: LESSON ONE
THE PERFECT FRANGIPANE

Learning how to make a frangipane tart filling is an invaluable skill – the soft, moist almond paste is not only delicious on its own, but makes a fantastic base for all manner of flavourings.

Once you’ve mastered the basic frangipane you can add extra flavours depending on the season. In summertime try adding a few raspberries to the tart case – the sweet, comforting almond contrasting with the occasional burst of tangy raspberries is one of the season’s great culinary treats. Pretty much any fruit makes a beautiful addition, though for harder fruits you may need to poach or roast them first so that they have enough time to get nice and tender during baking.

This recipe is for a plain frangipane, but feel free to experiment with all sorts of other flavours. Visit www.greatbritishchefs.com/recipes/prune-frangipane-tart-recipe for Graham’s spiced prune and frangipane tart recipe, which puts this filling into action.
LESSON ONE  THE PERFECT FRANGIPANE

Easy  8-10  1 hour and 15 minutes, plus resting time for the pastry

FRANGIPANE
230g butter, soft
230g sugar
110g whole eggs
230g ground almonds
60g plain flour

FOR THE TART
One non-stick 22cm loose-bottomed fluted tart tin lined with one quantity of sweet pastry.

EQUIPMENT FOR FILLING THE TART
Piping bag
Rolling pin
Palette knife

TOP TIPS
• Turning the bowl while you fold together the ingredients will incorporate them quickly and save on some elbow grease.

• Twist the lower half of the piping bag for better control while piping.

• Use a palette knife dipped into warm water to smooth the top of the tart – wetting it slightly will result in a smoother finish.

Click here, or scan the QR code with your mobile phone to be taken straight to the accompanying video for this lesson.
LESSON ONE  THE PERFECT FRANGIPANE

Preheat the oven to 210°C/gas mark 7. Cream together the butter and sugar in a mixing bowl until light and fluffy.

1. Make a well in the middle of the mixture and add the egg, a little at a time, beating between additions. Ensure the eggs are at room temperature before you add them, otherwise the mixture is at risk of splitting.

2. Once smooth, fold in the flour and ground almonds (rotating the bowl as you go) until the mixture is smooth and resembles the consistency of thick mashed potato. Transfer to a piping bag.

3. Starting in the centre and working outwards, pipe the frangipane in a spiral to cover the base of the tart. If you’re adding fruit to your tart, this is the time to arrange them on the pastry base and on top of the frangipane. Use a little more mixture to fill in any gaps.

4. Using a palette knife moistened with hot water, carefully smooth the surface of the frangipane.

5. Bake for 10 minutes to firm up the pastry, then reduce the temperature to 175°C/gas mark 4 and cook until the frangipane is dark and golden on top (around 25 minutes).
After mastering the art of a simple tart filling, some may find themselves itching for a challenge. Making a crème brûlée in itself can be tricky for the novice chef, but setting this luscious, creamy filling in pastry – then creating the perfectly crunchy brûlée topping – is a truly satisfying endeavour.

If you follow these simple steps, making a crème brûlée tart will be a pleasure rather than a chore. Graham reveals the secrets to obtaining that perfect, wobbly filling and crisp exterior without any risk of split mixtures, scrambled eggs or soggy pastry. For a spiced version, see the full recipe at www.greatbritishchefs.com/recipes/creme-brulee-tart-recipe
LESSON TWO

THE PERFECT CRÈME BRÛLÉE

Intermediate

8-10

3 hours, plus chilling time

VANILLA CRÈME BRÛLÉE

FILLING

1 tsp vanilla bean paste, or the scraped seeds of 2 vanilla pods
300g double cream
75g egg yolk
40g sugar

TO GLAZE

Icing sugar

FOR THE TART

One blind-baked 20cm sweet pastry tart case.

TOP TIPS

• It’s important that you start whisking as soon as the eggs hit the sugar, or the acidity of the sugar will start to ‘cook’ the eggs and they may turn slightly lumpy.

• Continually stir the custard while it’s in the pan to keep it at an even temperature. If it gets too hot, the eggs in the custard will scramble.

• You can tell the custard is ready without a temperature probe by coating your spatula with the mix and running your finger across it – it should be thick enough to leave a distinct line.

• Cover the pastry with icing sugar as well as the filling – this helps to prevent the pastry from burning.

• Three layers of sugar may seem a lot, but it adds bags of extra crunch to the brûlée topping.

Click here, or scan the QR code with your mobile phone to be taken straight to the accompanying video for this lesson.
Preheat the oven to 120°C/gas mark ½. Add the cream to a saucepan.

Scrape the vanilla bean paste or seeds into the pan and stir. Bring the cream slowly to 60°C, or until steaming (but not simmering) if you don’t have a temperature probe.

Meanwhile, whisk together the sugar and egg yolks in a separate bowl until pale and thick. Start whisking as soon as the eggs hit the sugar.

Pour a small splash of the warmed cream over the yolks and mix well to temper the eggs.

Pour the rest of the cream into the eggs and stir with a heatproof spatula to combine. Return the mixture back to the saucepan and place over a low heat. Stirring constantly, bring the mixture to 75°C.

If you don’t have a thermometer, drag your finger across the spatula – when it’s thick enough to leave a line in the custard, it is ready. Pour into a bowl, whisking until cooled slightly, then transfer to a measuring jug.
LESSON TWO THE PERFECT CRÈME BRÛLÉE

7. Place the blind-baked pastry case on a lined baking tray. Carefully pour the custard into the case almost to the top, then move the tray to the oven shelf. Carefully pour in the rest of the custard so it almost reaches the brim.

8. To remove any air bubbles, use a blowtorch to quickly go back and forth over the surface of the mixture. Bake for 25–30 minutes until the tart starts to set and has a slight wobble in the middle, then remove from the oven, allow to cool slightly and place in the fridge to set.

9. To create the brûlée topping, remove the baking paper from the tray and evenly dust the surface of the tart with icing sugar.

10. Gently run a blowtorch over the tart, ensuring you don’t hold it over any one place for too long. Rotate the tray as you work.

11. Once you have a nice even caramel, dust over another layer of icing sugar and blowtorch again.

12. Repeat the process one more time, then transfer to a serving board. Allow to cool completely, then slice and serve.
MASTERING TARTS: LESSON THREE

THE PERFECT CITRUS TART FILLING

Our final lesson focuses on a zingy, zesty tart filling made from clementines. Similar to a curd but thicker and set, it can be tricky to get the right texture that’s not too runny, not too firm. With Graham’s help, however, you’re left with an alternative to the standard lemon tart which has a bright, summery flavour.

Although the filling contains just four ingredients, maintaining the right balance and treating them with care is of utmost importance. The gradual tempering of eggs over a bain-marie and judging the ideal ‘wobble’ before removing from the oven are both make-or-break moments.

Once the tart is made, you can really go wild with garnishes. See Graham’s version at www.greatbritishchefs.com/recipes/clementine-tart-recipe, where the tart is finished with piped teardrops of Italian meringue, caramelised macadamia nuts and lightly charred clementine slices.
LESSON THREE  
THE PERFECT CITRUS TART FILLING

CLEMENTINE FILLING
500g fresh clementine juice, reduced to 250g
300g sugar
100g double cream
100g whipping cream
165g whole eggs
3 clementines, zest only

FOR THE TART
One blind-baked 20 cm sweet pastry tart case.

EQUIPMENT
Blowtorch

TOP TIPS
• Crack eggs into a bowl before adding to any mix so you can pick out pieces of shell.
• It’s important to heat the filling before baking in the oven so that it doesn’t split.
• Brushing a blind-baked tart case with egg and baking for a few minutes more will seal the case, preventing liquid fillings from turning the pastry soggy.
• Blowtorching the filling lightly before baking will help to remove air bubbles, creating an even surface.

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Preheat the oven to 120°C/gas mark ½. Whisk together the eggs and sugar until creamy – it’s important that you whisk as soon as the eggs hit the sugar, or the acidity of the sugar will start to ‘cook’ the eggs and they will become slightly lumpy.

1. Whisk in the clementine juice.

2. Add the cream, then grate the zest of one of the clementines into the mixture and whisk. Allow to chill in the fridge for a few hours to allow the flavours to develop.

3. Remove the filling from the fridge and lightly whisk to combine, as the mixture will have separated. Place the bowl over a pan of simmering water and stir occasionally, gently heating the mixture until it reaches 60°C. If you don’t have a temperature probe, it should be warm to the touch but not too hot.

4. Take your blind-baked tart case and grate zest from the remaining clementines over the base. The essential oils in the zest will be released as the tart heats, imparting a wonderfully aromatic flavour.

5. Transfer the filling mixture to a measuring jug. Half-fill the tart, then place the tart case on a baking tray on the oven shelf and pour in the rest of the filling. Make sure you fill right to the top of the case.
Lesson Three

The Perfect Citrus Tart Filling

7. Use a blowtorch to quickly go back and forth over the mix and remove any air bubbles on the surface.

8. Bake for 25–30 minutes until the tart starts to set but still has a slight wobble. It may require an additional 5–10 minutes. If you undercook the tart, it won’t set. Overcook, and the mixture will split.

9. Gently remove the tart from the oven – it should have a slight wobble. Allow to gradually cool to room temperature; if you try to cool it quickly in the fridge it might crack. Remove the pastry ring and use two step palette knives to gently slide the tart off the base and onto a board.