Tarte Tatin

Make-ahead · Serves a crowd · Makes one 10-inch tart (serves 6–8)

Ken's note: TBD

An upside-down caramelized fruit tart: the fruit cooks in butter and caramel in a skillet, is topped with pastry, baked, and turned out so the fruit is on top. One method, four fruits; choose a variation below. You need a 10-inch oven-safe skillet, preferably cast iron.

Ingredients

Pastry

- Half the All-Butter Pie Crust (one disk), rolled to a circle about 1 inch wider than the skillet; or 1 sheet of all-butter puff pastry, thawed. (Puff pastry shrinks, so leave extra.)

Classic Apple

- 6 Tbsp (¾ stick) unsalted butter
- ⅔ cup sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 6–7 firm apples (Granny Smith, Golden Delicious, or Honeycrisp), peeled, cored, and quartered
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice

Bartlett Pear and Pecan

- 6 Tbsp (¾ stick) unsalted butter
- ⅔ cup sugar
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp ground nutmeg
- ¼ tsp fine sea salt
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 Tbsp brandy or dark rum (optional)
- 5–6 firm-ripe Bartlett pears (2½–3 lb), peeled, halved, and cored, tossed with 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- ⅔ cup toasted pecan halves

Pear and Pomegranate

- 4 Tbsp (½ stick) unsalted butter
- ⅔ cup sugar
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 4–6 seckel pears (or other very firm small pears), cored and halved
- ½ cup pomegranate seeds (optional)

Peach

- 6 Tbsp (¾ stick) unsalted butter
- ½ cup sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 6 firm-ripe peaches, halved and pitted (peeled if you like), tossed with 1 Tbsp lemon juice

Method

Method (all variations)

1. Chill the rolled pastry. Heat the oven to 400°F (the pear-pomegranate version bakes cooler; see below).
2. Melt the butter in the skillet over medium heat, stir in the sugar (and any spices and salt), and cook, stirring now and then, until deep amber.
3. Off the heat, stir in any vanilla or liquor (it will bubble up). Arrange the fruit in the caramel, packed tightly, since it shrinks as it cooks. Cook over medium heat as directed for the fruit, until it softens slightly and the caramel thickens.
4. Drape the pastry over the fruit and tuck the edge down inside the pan. Cut a few steam vents.
5. Bake 25–30 minutes, until the pastry is deeply golden. Cool in the pan 10–15 minutes, so the caramel firms a little but doesn't set hard.
6. Run a thin knife around the edge, set a serving platter larger than the skillet over it, and invert in one confident motion; the caramel is very hot. Nudge any fruit back into place.

7. Serve warm with crème fraîche or vanilla ice cream.
8. Toss the apples with the lemon juice. Cook in the caramel 15–20 minutes, turning once, until they begin to soften and the caramel is thick and amber. Pastry and bake as above.
9. Trim a thin sliver off the back of each pear half so it sits flatter. Arrange the pears cut-side up in tight circles, using one extra pear in pieces to fill the gaps, and scatter the pecans in the gaps and over the top. Cook 8–10 minutes over medium heat. Pastry and bake as above. Pears can be peeled, halved, and cored up to a day ahead; leave them uncovered in the refrigerator so they dry out slightly and don't thin the caramel.
10. Firm seckel pears can cook in the caramel for a long time without turning mushy. Set the cinnamon stick in the middle, arrange the pears cut-side up, and cook over low heat 30–40 minutes (less for softer pears), until the pears have absorbed caramel and the juices bubble. Cool 15 minutes, then scatter on the pomegranate seeds and cover with the pastry, leaving a generous 1-inch overhang. Bake at 350°F (375°F for puff pastry) about 30 minutes. Serve with unsweetened crème fraîche.
11. Arrange the peaches cut-side up and cook 5–8 minutes, until slightly softened; ripe peaches release a lot of juice, so don't cook them longer. Pastry and bake as above.