

Alsatian Bacon and Onion Tarts

Serves 4

NO! It's not a pizza, it's a very traditional recipe from Alsace, on the border between France and Germany. If you want to make it a bit fancier you can always add mushrooms or grated gruyère cheese or a washed-rind cheese like Reblochon – or if you are a 'gourmand' pig like me, all of the above.

125 g (4½ oz) crème fraîche
250 g (9 oz) quark
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
240 g (8½ oz) plain (all-purpose) flour, plus extra for dusting
1 teaspoon baking powder
2 egg yolks
100 ml (3½ fl oz) olive oil
10 smoked bacon or speck bacon rashers, thinly sliced
1 large white onion, thinly sliced

Combine the crème fraîche, quark and salt and pepper in a bowl. Set aside.

Whisk the flour, baking powder and 1 teaspoon of salt in a bowl. Make a well in the centre.

Whisk together the egg yolks, 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) of olive oil and 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) of water in a bowl or jug, and pour into the well. Using a fork, stir until a loose dough forms. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface and knead the dough for 1 minute, then shape it into a disc, wrap it in plastic wrap and chill for about 30 minutes; this will make it easier to roll out.

Preheat the oven to 250°C (500°F). If you have one, place a pizza stone on the centre rack; otherwise use a thick baking tray.

Place a frying pan over medium heat and drizzle in the remaining olive oil. When hot, add the bacon and cook for about 5 minutes, or until caramelised. Remove to a plate. Add the onion to the same pan, reduce the heat to low and cook slowly for 8–10 minutes, or until translucent but without colour. Set aside.

Divide the dough into four pieces. Working with one piece at a time, roll it out to a 23 cm (9 inch) round and place on a sheet of baking paper. Spread a quarter of the cheese mixture over the top, leaving a 1 cm (½ inch) border around the edge.

Sprinkle with a quarter of the bacon and onion mixture. Transfer the dough (on the baking paper) to the pizza stone or baking tray. (If you like, you can bake two tarts at a time without affecting the cooking time.)

Reduce the oven temperature to 220°C (425°F) and bake for 8–10 minutes, or until lightly browned and crispy. Repeat with the remaining tarts. Enjoy! (I have no doubt you will.)

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