



Frangipane mince pies

You will need deep mince-pie tins for 18 pies and a 6.5cm cutter

MAKES 18

Ingredients:

PASTRY

175g plain flour
75g butter, cut into cubes
25g icing sugar
1 large egg, beaten

FRANGIPANE

100g butter, softened
100g caster sugar
2 large eggs
100g ground almonds
1 level tbsp plain flour
1/2 tsp almond extract, or to taste

FILLING AND TOPPING

just under 1 x 410g jar mincemeat flavoured
with about 2 tbsp brandy
a few flaked almonds
apricot jam to glaze
lemon juice

Method:

Preheat the oven to 200C/fan 180C/gas 6.

1. To make the pastry, measure the flour, butter and icing sugar into a food-processor bowl, then process until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Pour in the beaten egg and pulse the blade until the dough starts to form a ball. Knead lightly, wrap and chill for about 30 minutes if the pastry is not quite firm enough to roll out.
2. To make the frangipane, put the butter and sugar into the unwashed processor and blend until soft and creamy. Scrape down the sides, add the eggs and continue to process. Don't worry if the mixture looks curdled at this stage. Add the ground almonds, flour and almond extract, and mix briefly.
3. Roll the pastry out thinly on a lightly floured work surface and cut into 18 x 6.5cm circles. Use to line the tins. Spoon a teaspoon of mincemeat into each tartlet and top with the frangipane mixture. There is no need to spread the mixture flat as it will level out in the oven (but do not overfill the tins). Sprinkle a few flaked almonds on top.
4. Bake in the preheated oven for 15-17 minutes, watching carefully. Remove from the tins and allow to cool a little on a wire rack.
5. Dilute the apricot jam with a little lemon juice or water and bring to the boil. Brush each warm tartlet with glaze. Like traditional mince pies, these are best served warm.

VARIATION If you want to make a large tart, you can use the exact quantity above to fill a 23cm loose-bottomed tin, which will take about 25 minutes in the preheated oven.

PREPARING AHEAD Complete to the end of stage 4 up to 3 days ahead. Refresh in a moderate oven at 180C/fan 160C/gas 4 for 8-10 minutes, then glaze. Freeze the mince pies at the end of stage 4. Thaw at room temperature for 2-3 hours. Warm through in the oven as above, then glaze.

AGA Bake directly on the floor of the roasting oven for about 8 minutes to brown the pastry bases. Turn around and slide the tin on to the grid shelf on the floor of the roasting oven for a further 6-8 minutes until well-risen and golden brown. You may need the cold plain shelf on the second set of runners if they're getting too brown.