

lemon tart

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Lemon Tart

Tarte au citron: a thin, intensely sour set custard in a crisp sweet shell. It is the sharpest thing in this folder and it is the standard test of a pastry kitchen, because the shell must stay crisp under a very wet filling and the custard must set without a trace of grain.

What makes it work

- **The filling is a lemon curd baked in the shell**, not a starch-thickened pie filling like [lemon meringue](#)

[pie](#). Only egg sets it, so the temperature control is exact.

- **Bake at 140 °C.** Low, slow and gentle. At 180 °C the edges scramble.
- **Pour the filling in with the tart already on the oven shelf.** A full shell cannot be carried level.
- **Strain the mixture and skim every bubble.** Bubbles bake into a pitted top and this tart is judged on its surface.
- **Take it out at a slight wobble** — the middle should shimmer as one piece. It reads about 70 °C at the centre.
- **Seal the shell with egg white** after blind baking. Without it the base softens within two hours.

Ingredients

One 23 cm tart. Serves 10.

- 1 blind-baked, sealed shell — [pate sucree](#)
- 5 [eggs](#) plus 2 yolks
- 250 g caster sugar
- 200 ml [lemon juice](#), about 5 [lemons](#)
- zest of 3 lemons
- 250 ml double cream
- 2 g fine salt

To finish: powdered sugar, or a caramelised sugar top

Method

Blind bake the shell, brush with egg white, and return it for two minutes. Leave it in its tin on a baking tray.

Reduce the oven to **140 °C / 285 °F**.

Rub the zest into the sugar with your fingertips. Whisk in the eggs and yolks — whisk to combine only, never to aerate. Whisk in the lemon juice, then the cream and salt.

Strain through a fine sieve into a jug. Let it stand five minutes and skim off every bubble with a spoon.

Set the tart on the oven shelf and pour the filling in to the brim.

Bake **30–40 minutes**, until set with a slight wobble at the centre.

Cool completely at room temperature — three hours. Chill only if it must be held longer.

Notes

- **For a brûléed top**, dust with caster sugar and torch it just before serving. Under a grill it works but the shell warms.
- **Tarte au citron meringuée** adds an Italian meringue, torched. Lime, passion fruit, bergamot and blood orange all substitute directly for part of the juice.
- **Keeps three days refrigerated**, though the shell softens after day one.

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