

TARTE AUX POMMES

Apple Tart

You'll find a tart like this everywhere you go in France, and an apple tart in most cookery books. Up until very recently, my favourite apple tart was tarte tatin, but then I discovered this technique for pressing the apples down while they cook. The juices and caramel soak into the pastry, then gather up around the sides, making for a crisp and delicious base and an intensely flavoured topping. Granny Smiths are the best apples for this: they are very firm and have an acidity to balance the sweetness.

FOR 6–8

- 500g (1lb 2oz) puff pastry, rolled and cut into 1 x 30cm (12in) round
- 7 large Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored and sliced as finely as possible
- 150g (5½ oz) butter
- 350g (12oz) caster sugar

Preheat your oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas 4.

Prick the round of puff pastry with a fork and put it either on a non-stick baking tray or a tray lined with parchment paper. Lay the slices of apple first around the outside, overlapping each by about half and using only the perfect slices. Put the trimmings to one side. Put the last slice of apple in each round underneath the first. All of the trimmings and ends, slide halfway underneath each round to hold it up. Continue in ever-decreasing circles until you reach the centre. Put little knobs of butter all over the tart and sprinkle with 250g (9oz) sugar.

Put a piece of silicone paper over the top of the tart (the thicker stuff used to line cake tins and trays are good for this) and another tray on top. Press down well and bake the tart with the tray on top for about 25 minutes. Lift the tart from the oven, remove the top tray and very gently peel off the paper. The apples should be cooked and there will be a lot of juice around the outside. Sprinkle with the remaining sugar. Bake for a further 15–20 minutes until well caramelised. Just lifting the tart a little, check that the base is cooked as well. Allow to cool for about 10 minutes before trying to remove the tart from its tray and serve either hot or at room temperature.

