

APPLE TART with CARAMELIZED BUTTERMILK

Serves 4 to 6

I call this a casual tart rather than any number of other names that would be fitting (cough, galette, cough), because I want you to feel free to slice the apples however you want, roll the dough into whatever shape pleases you, and carry on to make your own version of what is surely a casual (and delicious) apple tart.

6 tablespoons ($\frac{3}{4}$ stick) unsalted butter

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon, cardamom, and/or ginger (optional)

$\frac{1}{2}$ recipe (1 disc) The Only Pie Crust (recipe follows)

All-purpose flour, for dusting

2 pounds firm tart apples (such as Pink Lady, Honeycrisp, Winesap, or Gold Rush), unpeeled, cored, and sliced $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup buttermilk

Flaky sea salt

Freshly ground black pepper (optional)

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
2. Melt the butter in a small pot over medium heat, swirling occasionally, until melted and starting to foam up and brown, 3 to 4 minutes (whisk the butter from time to time so that the solids don't stick to the bottom). Remove from the heat, add the spices (if using), and set aside.
3. Gently roll out the dough (1 disc) onto a lightly floured piece of parchment paper to about $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch thickness in any shape you like (irregular circle, rectangle, square, whatever!).
4. Leaving a 2-inch border on all sides, arrange the apples on top, either preciously shingled or haphazardly scattered. Brush the apples with the browned butter and sprinkle with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the sugar.
5. Fold the edges of the dough up over the apples and brush the dough with the buttermilk followed by the remaining 2 tablespoons sugar. Sprinkle everything with flaky sea salt and black pepper. Transfer the tart on the parchment to a rimmed baking sheet and bake until the entire crust is deeply golden brown and the apples are tender and cooked through, 45 to 50 minutes. Let cool before slicing and eating in any manner that feels casual and appropriate.

DO AHEAD

Tart can be baked 2 days ahead, wrapped tightly, and kept at room temperature.



THE ONLY PIE CRUST

Makes 2 discs of dough

There is a lot to say about pie crusts in general, but know that the most important thing is: Too much water is the enemy of a good flaky crust. Most add more water than needed because they think the dough is too dry or hard to work with, but a dough that has just been mixed will never be easy to work with—that's why we rest it: to give it a chance to hydrate and relax; becoming easier to roll. So while it's occasionally necessary to add a tablespoon or two more of water to get the dough feeling good, don't go overboard!

2½ cups all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons sugar

1 teaspoon kosher salt

1¼ cups (2 sticks plus 4 tablespoons) unsalted butter, cut into 1-inch pieces, chilled

1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar or distilled white vinegar

¼ cup ice water, plus more as needed

1. Whisk the flour, sugar, and salt in a large bowl. Using your hands, smash the butter between your palms and fingertips into the flour, creating long, thin, flaky bits. When most of it is incorporated and there are no large chunks remaining, dump the flour mixture onto a work surface.
2. Combine the vinegar with the ice water and drizzle it over the flour. Using the tips of your fingers, run your hands through the flour mixture. Do this a few more times, until it all starts coming together.
3. Using the palms of your hand, start kneading the dough, gathering up any dry bits from the bottom and placing them on the top to be incorporated. You can add 1, maybe 2 tablespoons water during this process if you feel the dough really needs it, but it should remain on the drier side (it will hydrate and become more tender as it rests).
4. When you've got a shaggy mass of dough (it will not be smooth and it certainly will not be shiny), knead it one or two more times, then divide in half. Pat each half into a flat disc, about 1 inch thick. Wrap each disc individually and refrigerate at least 2 hours.

DO AHEAD

This dough can be made up to 4 days ahead, tightly wrapped, and stored in the refrigerator; or made 1 month ahead, tightly wrapped in a resealable plastic bag, and frozen.