

ALSATIAN ONION TART & PISALADIÈRE

PASTRY DOUGH

1 ¼ cups flour
¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup chilled butter, diced
4 tablespoons ice water

FILLING

5 ½ tablespoons butter
4 onions, thinly sliced (about 7 cups)
1 clove garlic, minced
1 tablespoon minced fresh thyme
Salt and pepper to taste
½ cup water
3 slices bacon, cut into 1 ½ inch strips
½ cup flour
1 ½ cups milk
3 eggs
Pinch nutmeg

FOR PISALADIÈRE VERSION

¾ cup Niçoise olives
¾ cup anchovies

To prepare the pastry dough, place the flour, salt, and butter in a food processor and mix for about 10 seconds, or until the mixture resembles coarse meal. Add the ice water and pulse 3 or 4 times; the dough should form numerous small lumps at this stage but not a ball.

Immediately transfer the dough to a work surface and press the dough together with your hands to form a thick, flattened disk.

Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and chill for at least 1 ½ to 2 hours or up to 24 hours.

Preheat the oven to 375° F.

Unwrap the chilled pastry dough on a work surface and roll out in a circle about 1/16 thick. Place in a 9-inch pie pan, bringing the dough up the sides and trimming it off. Prick the bottom of the pastry dough at 1/2-inch intervals with a fork.

Lightly butter the shiny side of a 12-inch square of aluminum foil and line the pastry shell with it, shiny side down. Cover the foil with about 1 ½ cups of dry beans or pastry weights. Bake the pastry shell in the oven for 20 to 25 minutes.

While the pastry shell is baking, prepare the filling. Heat 1 ½ tablespoons of the butter in a heavy-bottomed saucepan and add the onions, garlic, thyme, salt, pepper, and water. Cover the pan and cook over low heat for 25 to 35 minutes, stirring often, until the onions are soft and light amber colored. Remove from the heat and let cool.

Remove the pastry shell from the oven, discard the beans (or remove the weights) and remove the foil. Bake for a few minutes longer, or until the pastry shell turns a light golden color. Remove from the oven and place on a wire rack to cool.

Fry the bacon in a small skillet for about 3 to 4 minutes over medium-high heat, or until cooked but not crispy. Remove from the heat, drain on paper towels, and set aside. In a saucepan, combine the remaining 4 tablespoons of the butter and the flour, and cook over low heat for 2 to 3 minutes, gently stirring. Slowly whisk in the milk, and stir continuously until the mixture thickens. Remove from the heat and fold in the eggs one at a time. Season with salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Fold in the reserved bacon and the onion mixture. Spoon the filling into the pastry shell and spread it evenly.

FOR PISALADIÈRE VERSION (OPTIONAL)

Arrange anchovies to form straight lines which are approximately one-inch from each other across the top of the pie. Then use more anchovies to make a second set of lines at a 45° degree angle to the first lines to form diamond shapes. Place a niçoise olive in the center of each diamond.

Bake in the oven for 30 to 35 minutes, or until the filling is just set. Slice and serve hot or at room temperature.