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Notes on Eating, Drinking and Cooking

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The Temporary Vegetarian: Leek Tart With Oil-Cured Olives

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When Katy Sparks, a restaurant consultant and the former executive chef of Quilty's in Manhattan, was developing a menu for Radish, a takeout place in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn, she created a leek tart with oil-cured olives. For the tart shell, she uses store-bought frozen puff pastry. "I love puff pastry, but because I've never been a great baker, I like help," she said. "We buy the Dufour puff pastry."

Mike Ciardi, the chef at Radish, used a knife to score a 1/4-inch border on the pastry, to define the edge of the tart. He then made a criss-cross scoring on the middle of the square of pastry.

"The scoring breaks the strands of dough," he said, "and it will puff where it's not scored." When it came out of the oven, he used a fork to gently poke the puffed middle to allow the steam to escape. Then he let the pastry cool for 10 minutes, and become fairly crisp. When the pastry was cool, he added the cooked filling, put the tart into the oven, and baked it until the cheese bubbled, and the edges were golden brown.

Leek Tart With Oil-Cured Olives

Yield 6 small servings
Time 1 hour

Ingredients

For the ricotta base:

1/2 cup whole milk ricotta cheese
1 large egg yolk
3 tablespoons olive oil
1/4 cup sour cream
Salt and black pepper

For the pastry:

One 14-ounce package Dufour or other all-butter puff pastry

For the topping:

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 to 4 leeks, white and light green parts only; cut diagonally into 1/3-inch wide slices, to make a total of 2 cups
1/2 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
Salt and black pepper
1 egg yolk, beaten
1 cup grated Gruyère cheese
12 oil-cured pitted black olives, torn or cut in half

Method

1. To make the ricotta base, preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a bowl, combine ricotta with egg yolk and olive oil; whisk until well blended. Stir in sour cream, and season with salt and pepper.
2. To make the pastry, cut pastry into six four-inch squares, and lightly score a border about 1/4 inch from the edge. Lightly score a criss-cross pattern in the inside of the square. Place on a baking sheet and bake until puffed and lightly browned, 10 to 20 minutes. Remove from oven and poke the center with a fork to allow steam to escape. Cool for 10 minutes.
3. To make the topping, place a medium sauté pan over medium heat. Melt butter, add leeks and thyme, and sauté until leeks are soft and lightly caramelized, 10 to 15 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste; set aside.
4. Brush the edge of the puff pastry with beaten egg yolk. Spread scored area of pastry with the ricotta base, and sprinkle evenly with Gruyère. Top with leeks and olives. Bake until the edges are golden brown, and the cheese is bubbling, 10 to 14 minutes. Serve hot.

Source: Adapted from Radish