

# Asparagus & Poached Egg Puff Tarts & Parmesan



**Serves 6**   **Prep 25 mins**

**Cooking 10 - 30mins**

**Easy**

## Ingredients

### For the tarts

plain flour, for dusting  
500g puff pastry  
200g low-fat cream cheese  
¼ lemon, finely grated, zest only  
flaked sea salt  
freshly ground black pepper  
30 medium asparagus spears  
1 egg, beaten, to glaze (or a little milk)

### For the topping

6 medium free-range eggs  
25g parmesan, made into shavings with a potato peeler  
good handful small basil leaves  
drizzle extra virgin olive oil (optional)

1. Line a large baking tray with baking parchment and set aside.
2. Dust some flour on a clean work surface & roll out the puff pastry to a 28x30cm rectangle ± the thickness of a £1 coin. Trim the edges so that the sides are nice & straight. Cut the pastry in half down the length & then into thirds across the width to give six 10x14cm.
3. Put the pastry rectangles on the baking tray, cover & refrigerate for 20 mins (or freeze for 10 mins) so the pastry firms up. It is important to do this so that when the puff pastry bakes in the oven, the flour cooks before the butter melts ensuring a much lighter pastry.
4. Preheat the oven to 220C/425F/Gas 7 (200C fan). Mix the cream cheese & lemon zest together in a small bowl & season with salt & pepper. Trim the asparagus to 10 cm long.
5. Once firm, remove the pastry from the fridge & use a sharp knife to mark a 1cm wide border around each rectangle. Then, using a crosshatch pattern, mark the border so each pastry shape resembles a picture frame. Take a fork and prick the centre of each shape about 10 times, right through to the baking tray. Brush the border with the beaten egg (or milk), making sure that it does not go down the sides of the pastry (if it happens, wipe it away or the egg will stick the layers of the pastry together & stop the pastry from rising).
6. Divide the cream cheese between the 6 tarts, spreading it out & making sure that it stays inside the 'frame'. Lay 5 spears in a single layer, touching each other & pointing the same way on the tart. Push them down slightly.
7. Bake the tarts in the oven for 18-20 minutes, or until the pastry has puffed up nicely and is firm and golden-brown where it has risen.
8. About 10 mins before the tart is ready, pour ± 4cm of water into or a deep frying pan & bring to the boil over a high heat. Turn the heat down to bring the water to a gentle simmer. Crack an egg into a very small bowl & slide it into the water. Repeat with all of the eggs, spacing them apart. Cook them for ± 3-4 minutes, or until the white is cooked but the yolk still soft. Remove with a slotted spoon onto a warm plate.
9. Remove the tarts from the oven & divide between serving plates. Sit a poached egg on top of each tart & scatter over parmesan & basil leaves and serve.