

Caramelised Peach Pastries



Serves 8

Prep 30 mins + refrigeration

Cook: 40 mins

Challenge

Ingredients

400g fresh or frozen puff
pastry

500ml double cream

Confectioner's custard

500ml milk

1 vanilla pod

6 egg yolks, + 1 for egg wash

100g caster sugar

20g plain flour

20g cornflour

For the peaches

8 ripe peaches, yellow
and/or white

200g caster sugar

remains of vanilla pod

1. Set the oven to 220C/425F/gas mark 7. First, make the confectioner's custard. Pour the milk into a saucepan. Split the vanilla pod and scrape seeds into the milk. Toss in the pod, too. Gently simmer for 2-3 mins to infuse.
2. Separate the eggs. Beat the yolks with the sugar until pale. Sift the 2 flours & add to the mix. Stir gently. Add the infused milk. Remove the vanilla pod (rinse & reserve for later). Return it all to the pan & cook, stirring constantly, until the custard thickens, then stir gently for 1 min to ensure the flour is cooked. Tip the custard through a sieve for a smooth finish. Decant into a clean bowl, cover well and refrigerate.
3. On a cool, lightly floured surface, roll out the puff pastry to roughly 12cm wide, 24cm long. With a very sharp knife, slice 8 squares, roughly 6cm in length. Put these on a sheet, then refrigerate or freeze for at least an hour before cooking. They'll freeze well for 1-2 days if wrapped well.
4. Before beginning to cook the peaches, have a tray ready to put the cooked peach slices.
5. Cut the peaches in half or quarters or sixths. Put the sugar & reserved vanilla pod in a wide, heavy-based frying pan over a gentle heat. When the sugar begins to bubble a bit and bronzed sugar pushes through to the surface, raise the heat. Lift the pan and gently swirl the sugar into the forming caramel. When it is completely liquid and coloured a rich mahogany, tip in the peach slices very gently. They may sputter, so stand back and beware of sugar sparks. Boil the caramel wildly for a minute – the bold may wish to toss the pan! – or merely gently stir with a wooden spoon so the caramel can coat and cook into the peach slices.
6. Remove the pan from the heat & tip the caramelised peach slices & syrup on to a tray. Put the squares of pastry on a lined baking sheet. Make a wash with an egg yolk & a spoonful of cream. Brush the squares with it. With a sharp knife, score out a square within the pastry, leaving a shallow border. Put the baking sheet in the hot oven. Turn the heat down to 180C/gas mark 4. Bake for 15-20 mins, or until the pastry is risen & golden. Reduce heat to 150C/300F/gas mark 2 for 10 mins, or until the pastry cases are crisp. Remove & set aside to cool.
7. Lightly whip the cream into peaks then fold in the confectioner's custard.
8. Remove the inner lid of the little sarcophagus & discard any uncooked pastry. Fill the hole with spoonfuls of custard cream. Remove the skin from the caramelised peaches & lay them in and upon the custard cream.
9. Dot each lid with a spoonful of cream to cap it off and serve.