

Parisian Flan

Adapted from [Baking with Dorie](#), featured in the [xoxo Dorie newsletter](#)

Makes about 12 servings

GOOD TO KNOW BEFORE YOU START

About the pan: A springform works best here. If you've got a cake ring — a metal circle with no bottom — use it. Put it on a lined baking sheet and then, when the flan is ready to be unmolded, just lift the ring up and away from the pastry. If you like this idea, but don't have a cake (or entremet) ring, remove the bottom of the springform and turn the form upside down, so that the lip is at the top.

About the custard: I like to use warmer than traditional flavors in my flan, so I use some brown sugar (you can use all granulated if you'd like) and add some dark rum. If rum is not for you, add more vanilla.

About the puff pastry: Depending on what brand of puff pastry you buy, you may find yourself faced with a geometry problem: How do you roll a rectangular sheet of pastry into a round? The easiest way to deal with it is to roll the dough into a large square and then cut the dough into a circle. If you can find puff pastry that's already rolled into a round, you'll be on easy street.

About timing: The custard needs to chill before filling and baking the tart. Once baked, the tart has to cool and then be refrigerated for another hour or more. It's ideal if you make it the day before—it really benefits from an overnight stay in the fridge.

INGREDIENTS

For the filling

- 3 cups (720 ml) milk
- 1/2 cup (120 ml) water
- 1/2 cup (100 grams) sugar
- 1/4 cup (50 grams) packed brown sugar
- 1/3 cup (43 grams) cornstarch
- 4 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons dark rum (or an additional 1 1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract)
- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract

For the pastry:

- 1 sheet puff pastry (at least 8 1/2 ounces; 240 grams), preferably all-butter, defrosted if necessary, or 1 recipe pâte brisée, pâte sucrée or pie dough rolled into a 12- to 13-inch round and chilled if necessary

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DIRECTIONS

To make the filling: Give a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan a quick rinse with cold water, but don't dry the pan (this will help prevent the milk from scorching), then pour in the milk and water. Stir in half of the granulated sugar and bring just to a boil—keep an eye on it: Once the milk boils, it's just a nanosecond before it bubbles over the pot and makes a mess. Remove the pan from the heat.

While the liquids are heating, whisk together the rest of the granulated sugar, the brown sugar and cornstarch in a large bowl. Add the eggs and whisk energetically to blend well. Put the bowl on a folded kitchen towel or a silicone potholder to anchor it. Whisking the sugar-egg mixture nonstop, drizzle in about one quarter of the hot liquid. Then, still whisking, pour in the rest in a steadier stream.

Rinse the saucepan (no need to be thorough) and pour the custard mixture into it. Set the pan over medium heat and, whisking without stopping and making sure that the whisk reaches every part of the pan, including the corners, cook the custard until the first bubble rises to the top and pops, at which point the custard will be noticeably thicker and your whisk will leave tracks. Lower the heat a bit and cook and stir for another minute or two, your insurance that the custard is sufficiently cooked and that the cornstarch won't taste raw.

Scrape the custard into a clean bowl and stir in the rum, if you're using it, and vanilla. Press a piece of plastic wrap against the surface and let the custard sit at room temperature for about 30 minutes; stir now and then if you're around.

Put the bowl in the refrigerator and chill the custard for at least 1 hour. Better yet, let it get thoroughly cold. You can speed the process by placing the custard bowl in a larger bowl filled with ice cubes and cold water—come back to the bowl now and then to stir until it's cold. (*The custard can be refrigerated in an airtight container overnight.*)

To make the crust: Butter a 9-inch springform pan (if your pan is 9 1/2 inches, that's fine).

If you're using puff pastry, roll it out into a round that's 12 to 13 inches in diameter (see above); if you're using tart dough, you're all set. Using your hands or rolling the pastry up around your pin to make it easier, position the pastry over the pan. Gently ease it into the pan and press it against the bottom and up the sides. You're aiming for the dough to come about 1 1/2 inches up the sides. If the edges are ragged and uneven, just leave them—they'll get trimmed later. Put the pan in the refrigerator until ready to use; when the crust is firm, cover it tightly. If the edges are ragged and uneven, just leave them—they'll get trimmed later. Put the pan in the refrigerator until ready to use; when the crust is firm, cover it tightly.

When you're ready to bake: Center a rack in the oven and preheat it to 425 degrees F.

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Remove the custard from the fridge and whisk it a bit to loosen it, then scrape it into the pastry-lined springform pan and smooth the top. Using a table knife, trim the dough so that it reaches just about 1/2 inch above the custard.

Bake the tart for 50 to 55 minutes, or until the top of the custard is dark, dark brown—if it looks black in places, that's great and most authentic. It won't be brown all over, though, and it might bubble and mound in places. If you get bubbles, you can prick them with the tip of a knife or just leave them.

Transfer the pan to a rack and wait for 5 minutes, then, if some of the custard has risen above the crust and stuck to the sides of the pan, run a table knife gently between the pan and the custard. Let the flan cool to room temperature, then cover it lightly and refrigerate it. It's best if you can chill it overnight, but that's not always convenient—give it as much time as you can.

When you're ready to serve, remove the sides of the springform and if you'd like, lift the tart off the base and onto a serving platter (if it's easier, leave it on the base). You can serve it cold, at room temperature or at any temp in between. Cut into wedges and serve with a fork . . . or don't. When you're having the tart as a snack, do as Parisians do: Eat it out of hand.

STORING: Covered tightly, the tart will keep for about 3 days in the fridge. Make sure to keep it away from foods with strong odors.