

Springtime Cherry Blossom Tarts

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Ingredients:

2 cups flour
1/3 cup butter (I use unsalted)
1/3 cup lard (see note below)
1 1/2 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon salt (omit if you are using salted butter)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract (ONLY if you are making a sweet pie. Omit the vanilla if you are making a savory pie)
4 to 5 tablespoons cold water (preferably filtered water)
1 can cherry pie filling
1 tablespoon cream
cinnamon sugar for dusting

1 twelve count muffin tin (sprayed or buttered to avoid sticking)

Stir the dry ingredients together in a large bowl. "Cut" the butter and lard into the dry ingredients until it is crumbly looking. Now add the vanilla and 4 tablespoons of water and mix together (still use the pie cutter or fork to mix in the liquid). Only add the 5th tablespoon of water if the dough still seems dry. Now form the dough into a ball with your hands.

NOTE: If you only want to use butter then you may omit the lard and use 2/3 cup butter instead.

Now you are ready to roll out the dough - first divide the dough into 2 equal parts. Now you must dust the rolling surface with flour and you might even need to dust more flour onto the dough half way through rolling. Keep rolling until the dough is a little less than 1/4 inch thick. Use your tart cutter & cut as many as you can on this rolled out piece of dough. While the dough is rolled out - around the tart pieces use the rolled out scraps to cut your petals with the petal cutter. Remove the cut tart pieces & gently press each one into a muffin space (see pictures above). Remove the petal pieces from the rolling surface & set aside until later. Continue cutting & placing in the muffin tins until all dough has been used up (I had enough to make 9 tarts - the amount will all depend on the size of your tart cutter & the thickness of your dough. Remember to cut out enough petal pieces for each tart - you will need 4 petal pieces per tart. So, for my 9 tarts I used 36 petals. Then I also used the last bit of pie crust dough to make little round balls for the middle of the flower).

Open the can of cherry pie filling & distribute this filling into each tart crust (see picture below).

Begin placing the petals on top of the cherry pie filling (see pictures below). Add the little crust dough ball in the middle of each cherry blossom. With a pastry brush - spread a little cream on top of each dough flower & dust with cinnamon sugar. Bake in a preheated 425 degree oven for 30 to 40 minutes or until desired golden brown color is achieved (see picture below). Remove the pan from the oven & place on a cooling rack for about 10 minutes. If any filling bubbled over, gently take a dull knife and move that knife under the dough edges (be very careful!!).

IMPORTANT - If you do not spray the pan properly OR if you do not allow the tarts to cool a little then this will happen (see picture below).

Dollop with a little whipping cream or just serve plain & ENJOY!

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