

TORTA DELLA NONNA

No one knows whose Tuscan *nonna*, or grandmother, invented this tart with a pastry cream filling, but it is a classic enjoyed in both homes and restaurants. The recipe combines two of the building blocks of the Italian sweet kitchen: the crisp dough known as *pasta frolla* and luscious pastry cream. Torta della nonna comes in many different versions. Double-crust or single-crust, pine nuts or almonds, lemon- or vanilla-flavored filling (or, as here, both): the possibilities are endless, and once you've got the basic recipe down, you can feel free to experiment.

MAKES ONE 9-INCH TART,
ABOUT 8 SERVINGS

CRUST

3¼ cups unbleached all-purpose or 00 flour, plus more for flouring work surface and pan
1½ cups confectioners' sugar
1 vanilla bean
1 stick plus 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into cubes, plus more for buttering pan
4 large eggs

FILLING AND FINISHING

4¼ cups plus 1 tablespoon whole milk
1 vanilla bean
8 egg yolks
¼ teaspoon sugar
¾ cup unbleached all-purpose flour
Finely grated zest of ½ lemon
1 large egg
1 cup sliced almonds
Confectioners' sugar for sprinkling
Raspberries for garnish
Mint leaves for garnish
Lemon orange sauce [page 296]

For the crust, in a large bowl, combine the 3¼ cups flour and confectioners' sugar. Split the vanilla bean and scrape in the seeds. Toss the butter cubes with the dry ingredients. Make a well in the center and add the eggs. Beat the eggs with a fork, then use your hands to incorporate the eggs, break the butter into small pieces, and knead the dough in the bowl. Once a shaggy dough has formed, transfer to a lightly floured surface and continue kneading until smooth and firm. Divide the dough [by weight is best, but you can do it by eye as well] into two pieces, one ⅔ of the total and the other ⅓. Shape each portion into a ball, flatten into a disk, wrap in plastic, and refrigerate.

For the filling, place 4¼ cups milk in a large saucepan. Split the vanilla bean and scrape the seeds into the pot. Add the vanilla bean pod to the pot as well. Bring to a simmer over low heat. When the milk begins to bubble, immediately remove from the heat and steep the vanilla bean in the warm milk 5 to 6 minutes.

Meanwhile, beat the egg yolks with the sugar. When light in color and thickened, gradually beat in the flour and lemon zest. Remove the vanilla bean pod from the milk and add the egg yolk mixture to the milk in a thin stream, whisking constantly. Put the saucepan back over low heat and cook, whisking constantly. It will seem as though nothing is happening, and then the mixture will thicken suddenly. When it is very thick, remove from heat and transfer to a bowl. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap, pressing the plastic against the surface of the cream. Refrigerate until cooled.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Butter and flour a 9-inch tart pan. Remove the dough from the refrigerator and let it rest at room temperature for about 5 minutes. On a lightly floured surface, roll the larger piece of dough into a circle 11 inches in diameter. Transfer to the tart pan and press against the bottom and sides. Evenly spread the prepared filling over the bottom crust.



Roll out the smaller piece of dough into a circle 9 inches in diameter. Place it on top of the filling and pinch the edges of the tart to seal the two crusts together. Beat the egg with the remaining 1 tablespoon milk and brush it over the surface of the top crust. Scatter on the almonds. Bake in the preheated oven until golden and dry to the touch, 50 minutes to 1 hour.

Allow the tart to cool completely before serving. Sprinkle heavily with confectioners' sugar and garnish individual slices with raspberries, mint leaves, and lemon orange sauce.

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