

BLUEBERRY & BLACKBERRY CROSTATA



Although you could use other biscuits in the filling (I've used both almond macaroons and digestives if I've been stuck) I find that the slightly bitter almond flavour of amaretti biscuits or the spicy goodness of Dutch Speculaas biscuits are spot-on with stone fruits in particular. On that note, if you can, try to use fruit that is just ripe and sweet, but not too soft or it may collapse a bit too much as it cooks (it will still taste wonderful though).

SERVES 8 - 10

INGREDIENTS

Shortcrust pastry:

1 ½ cups (225g) plain flour

¼ teaspoon salt

125g unsalted butter, in small chunks, chilled

¼ cup (60ml) iced water

2 teaspoons regular white sugar, extra, for sprinkling

Filling:

4 large amaretti biscuits (or spicy Dutch speculaas biscuits)

1 ½ tablespoons plain flour

1 heaped teaspoon ground cinnamon

3 tablespoons caster sugar

Approx. 600g blueberries (or a mixture of blueberries and blackberries)

Blueberry or mixed berry jam, warmed so it's a little runny

Rich thick cream or vanilla bean ice cream, to serve

METHOD

- To make the pastry, put the flour and salt into a food processor and whiz them together. Add the butter and process until the mixture resembles coarse breadcrumbs. With the processor running, steadily pour the iced water into the flour mixture. Continue to whiz until the dough forms a ball around the blade. Take it out, knead it gently just to bring it together, and flatten it into a disc. Wrap it tightly in cling film and chill for about 40 minutes, or until it's firm but supple enough to roll. (If you've made the pastry a day or two ahead of time and kept it in the fridge, just remember that you need to let it soften a bit at room temperature, so it's supple enough to roll easily.)

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METHOD CONTINUED

- Preheat your oven to 205C. Line the base of a large (roughly 30cm round) pizza pan with a sheet of baking paper (or you can use an oven tray) and set it aside.
- To make the filling, crush the biscuits finely and mix them with the flour, cinnamon and 2 tablespoons of the sugar – or whiz them all together in the food processor. Set this mixture aside.
- When the pastry is ready, roll it out thinly into a round that is a bit larger than the prepared pizza tin. (You need the pastry to be bigger than the tin as this excess pastry eventually forms a border for the crostata.) Drape it over the tin leaving an overhang all around and press it very gently into the sides. Spread the amaretti mixture evenly over the base, then sit the blueberries (and blackberries, if you're using them too) on top in a tightly packed layer. Sprinkle the berries with the remaining tablespoon of caster sugar. Gently fold the pastry border over the fruit, pleating and pressing it gently to form a 'frame' of pastry. Sprinkle the extra 2 teaspoons of white sugar over the pastry.
- (If you're making the crostata on a baking tray, once the pastry is rolled, centre it on the baking paper. Sprinkle the biscuit mixture evenly over the pastry leaving a 5-6cm border all around so you can flip this over to form the rim of the crostata, then just continue with the recipe.)
- Bake the crostata for 35-40 minutes or until the pastry is crisp and deep golden brown. Remove it from the oven to a cooling rack and leave it to cool in the tin for at least 40 minutes so the filling firms up. I can't tell you just how wonderful the crostata smells at this stage but it's worth hanging on to eat it as its flavour really is best at room temperature when the juices have had a chance to meld with the biscuits.
- With the help of the baking paper underneath gently slide the crostata out of the pan onto a large flat serving plate. Serve with rich cream or vanilla bean ice-cream.

