

Tomato and Mozzarella Tart

MAKES ONE 16 BY 8-INCH TART, SERVING 6 TO 8

Thawing the frozen puff pastry in the refrigerator overnight will help prevent cracking when unfolding it. Be sure to use a low-moisture supermarket mozzarella sold in block form, not fresh water-packed mozzarella. If you prefer to do some advance preparation, the tart shell can be prebaked through step 1, cooled to room temperature, wrapped in plastic wrap, and kept at room temperature for up to two days before being topped and baked with the mozzarella and tomatoes.

Flour for work surface

- 1 1.1-pound box frozen puff pastry (Pepperidge Farm), thawed in box in refrigerator overnight
- 1 large egg, beaten
- 2 ounces Parmesan cheese, grated (1 cup)
- 1 pound Roma tomatoes (3 to 4 medium), cored and cut crosswise into ¼-inch-thick slices
- Salt and pepper
- 2 medium garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 8 ounces low-moisture whole-milk mozzarella cheese, shredded (2 cups)
- 2 tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh basil leaves

1. Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 425 degrees. Dust work surface with flour and unfold both pieces of puff pastry onto work surface to form 1 large sheet with border, using beaten egg as directed. Sprinkle Parmesan evenly over shell; using fork, uniformly and thoroughly poke holes in shell. Bake 13 to 15 minutes, then reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees; continue to bake until golden brown and crisp, 13 to 15 minutes longer. Transfer to wire rack; increase oven temperature to 425 degrees.

2. While shell bakes, place tomato slices in single layer on double layer of paper towels and sprinkle evenly with ½ teaspoon salt; let stand 30 minutes. Place second double layer of paper towels on top of tomatoes and press firmly to dry tomatoes. Combine garlic, olive oil, and pinch each salt and pepper in small bowl; set aside.

3. Sprinkle mozzarella evenly over warm (or cool, if made ahead) baked shell. Shingle tomato slices widthwise on top of cheese (about 4 slices per row); brush tomatoes with garlic oil. Bake until shell is deep golden brown and cheese is melted, 15 to 17 minutes. Cool on wire rack for 5 minutes, sprinkle with basil, slide onto cutting board or serving platter, cut into pieces, and serve.



Photography by Daniel J. van Ackere



WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: Tired of tomato tarts with soggy crusts and long preparation time, we developed a tomato tart recipe that would have a solid bottom crust and great vine-ripened flavor. Our secrets for a terrific tomato tart recipe? We used a two-step baking method for a flaky yet rigid crust and then “waterproofed” it with egg wash and layers of two kinds of cheese. We salted sliced tomatoes for 30 minutes to remove excess juice and then gently pressed them with paper towels. Baking the tart at 425 degrees quickly melted the cheese and preserved the tomatoes’ meaty texture.