

Cleo Coyle's Easy, Individual Tarte Tatins

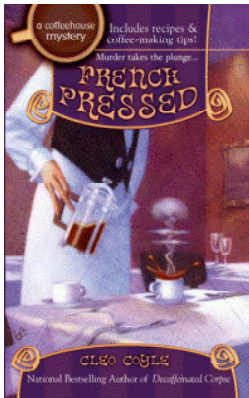
(Upside-Down Caramel-Apple Tarts)

& Crème Chantilly

(fresh whipped cream)



“Easy to make. Wow on the plate.”



This dessert was mentioned in
Cleo Coyle's
French Pressed
(A Coffeehouse Mystery)

Tarte Tatins are as common in France as our apple pie. Legend has it that the dessert was created around 1900 by a pair of spinster sisters, who sold them to make their living. The last name of these women was Tatin. And that's why this amazing tart with buttery-sweet caramel glaze is called "tarte Tatin."

My recipe is a quick, easy version of a more traditional single large tart. The version below is pretty much foolproof. It's easy and quick, can be made in advance and stored in the fridge before baking and serving, and the individual aspect lets you control how few or many you need to serve your family or guests.

Included in this recipe, as an option, are directions for making "pate sucee" or sweet pastry dough, which is a more traditional crust for any French dessert tart.

Cleo Coyle's Easy, Individual Tarte Tatins (Upside-Down Caramel-Apple Tarts)

Recipe (c) 2008 by Alice Alfonsi who writes as Cleo Coyle with her husband Marc Cerasini

6 Tarts

Filling ingredients:

3 Golden Delicious apples*
1-1/2 teaspoons lemon juice
1-1/2 teaspoons flour

Caramel ingredients:

3 Tablespoons butter
6 Tablespoons white sugar
6 Tablespoons dark brown sugar

You will also need:

1 package Pepperidge Farm FROZEN Puff Pastry Shells **
1 egg (the white of the egg to brush the pastry)
6 ramekins (7 to 8 oz size) – grease the insides with butter
6 dessert plates

Prepare the filling:

Peel and core 3 Golden Delicious apples. (* Note: Other types of apples may not give you the best results.) Cut apples into relatively thin, even slices, about ½ inch thick. Toss the slices in a bowl with the lemon juice first, then the flour, coating them lightly. (The lemon prevents apples from turning brown and the flour will absorb excess liquid released by the apples. If you skip the flour, your tarts may end up watery.)

Prepare the caramel:

Grease the bottom and sides of your ramekins with butter. Then melt the 3 tablespoons of butter in a nonstick saucepan. Add the white and brown sugars and stir over low heat with a rubber spatula until the sugars dissolve completely in the butter. The mixture will become thick. While still warm, divide the sugar mixture evenly among your 6 ramekins. I use a rubber spatula to even the mixture out at the bottom of each ramekin. (The mixture will harden as it cools, and that's okay. In the oven, it will melt into a sweet, buttery caramel glaze for your apples.)

Prepare for baking:

Divide your apple slices among the ramekins, layering them on their sides. You can bake the ramekins immediately at this point or store them by covering each ramekin with plastic wrap and placing in the fridge. (I've stored mine as long as 24 hours and they still came out beautifully.) When ready to bake, preheat oven to 400 degrees. Remove plastic wrap and place ramekins on a baking sheet and bake for 20 minutes. (You are only halfway done.) Remove your baking sheet of ramekins from oven and (remembering the ramekins are hot!) carefully set a FROZEN Pepperidge Farm puff pastry shell on top of the layered apple slices of each ramekin. Brush the top of the frozen puff pastry shell with egg white (this will protect the delicate pastry and also help it brown beautifully). Return ramekins to oven for another 20 to 25 minutes. Pastry is done when dough puffs up and turns golden brown and the apples are cooked through. (You can test softness of apples with tip of sharp knife.)



Finish baking and rest:

Remove ramekins from oven and set on a cool surface. Let rest for five minutes. (The resting is important because your caramel will be boiling hot and you need to let it settle down.)

Now plate:

Remembering that the ramekins are still HOT, use oven mitts to place a dessert plate over a ramekin and carefully flip it (like pineapple upside down cake). After you flip the tart, the flaky puff pastry will be on the bottom of the plate and the buttery sweet caramel will drip down over the entire tart and pool around it on the dessert plate as if a professional chef had plated and sauced it. If slices of apples stick to the ramekin just use your clean fingers to replace it prettily over the tart. Serve warm as is or with whipped cream or ice cream.



Cleo's note: I've made this recipe many times and it worked perfectly EVERY time. It's very nearly foolproof! But please remember that you are working with HOT ramekins at the stage of placing pastry over the apples and again when you are flipping the ramekin for plating. BE CAREFUL!

**** Cleo's Optional Crust:** If you prefer a homemade crust instead of the frozen puff pastry dough, then simply use the recipe on the next page to make "pate sucee" or sweet pastry dough. All you have to do is roll out the dough, cut the dough to fit the tops of your ramekins, and place over the half-baked ramekins instead of the frozen dough. In other words, just follow the above recipe exactly, but instead of putting the frozen puff pastry shells on your ramekins, place your homemade dough instead and make a small slice with a knife in the top of each crust for venting steam. Also, I had better results NOT brushing the homemade dough with the egg white (only your frozen puff pastry dough will really benefit from that step).



Pate Sucree (sweet pastry dough)

6 tablespoons butter
1/4 cup confectioners' (powdered) sugar
1 egg yolk
1 teaspoon vanilla
1/4 teaspoon salt
1-1/4 cups all-purpose flour

Using an electric mixer, cream butter and sugar. Add egg, vanilla, salt, and flour. Mix only enough to incorporate elements and form a smooth dough (over mixing will make dough tough). Cover dough with plastic wrap and chill for thirty minutes (cold dough is easier to work with).

Now roll out dough between sheets of wax paper on a flat surface. If dough is sticking excessively, dust it and your rolling pin with a bit of flour. Once the dough is rolled flat, cut it into circles that will fit over the top of your ramekins.

Use your fingers to press the dough to the edges, sealing up the apples and caramel. Be sure to make a small slice with a knife in the top of the dough to allow steam to escape. Bake as directed in above recipe.



Crème Chantilly (fresh whipped cream)

Makes 2 cups

1 cup heavy cream (aka whipping cream)
3 Tablespoons granulated white sugar
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Cleo's note: For years I was afraid of making fresh whipped cream for fear I'd mess it up or the whipped cream would just deflate in minutes. I'm glad to report that this is VERY easy to make and the whipped cream will keep for hours in your fridge. You can always pull out your balloon whip and give it a bit of a beating just before serving. I know products like Cool Whip and Reddi Whip are easy to use, but once in a while, the fresh version really is a special treat!



TO MAKE: For best results chill your bowl and beaters of your electric mixer in fridge for 30 minutes (or in the freezer for 15). Place cream, sugar, and vanilla in the chilled bowl and beat on medium. Cream will begin to thicken. At this point, beat on high until the cream doubles in volume. When it forms stiff peaks, you're finished and ready to dollop on or beside your dessert.