

## MAIN COURSE

### SPRING ALLIUM TART WITH CHARRED ASPARAGUS, BABY LEEKS AND GRUYERE

#### Ingredients

##### Pastry:

- 200g wholemeal plain flour
- 100g cold cubed butter
- 2-4tbs cold water
- salt

##### Tart filling and custard:

- 250g tub mascarpone
- 150 grated gruyere
- 80ml milk
- 2 large eggs
- 1 large leek, white and pale green parts only chopped
- 4-6 spring onions, chopped
- 6-8 asparagus spears, chopped
- 1 clove of garlic (or a small handful of wild garlic leaves if you can get hold of them)
- A good grating of fresh nutmeg
- Salt and pepper
- A knob of butter

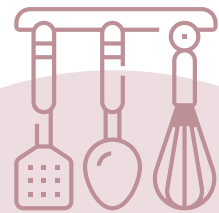
##### Tart decoration:

- 3-5 slim baby leeks, left whole
- 3-5 slim asparagus spears, left whole
- A knob of butter
- A little water
- Salt and pepper

#### Method

##### Pastry and blind baking:

- With light fingers rub the butter into the flour in a large bowl, lifting and aerating the flour as you go (this brings lightness to the pastry)



##### Equipment checklist

- 23cm metal fluted tart case with a loose bottom
- Rolling pin
- Baking beans (ceramic or just old dried rice / beans)
- Compostable baking parchment
- Heavy based frying pan

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- Once it resembles fine breadcrumbs add a little water at a time just to bring it together into a soft dough (don't overdo the water as this will make the pastry tough)
- Tip it out on the surface and just bring together lightly to ensure its a smooth ball then flatten slightly and wrap in plastic wrap or resealable bag and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes (the pastry can also be kept in the fridge for a week or the freezer for three months)
- When ready to bake roll out the pastry to the thickness of a pound coin being careful to use a little flour on the surface and rolling pin so it doesn't stick
- Roll around your rolling pin and then lay it into your 23cm fluted pastry case
- Lightly press the pastry into the base and more firmly into the sides of the case leaving the excess pastry attached
- Refrigerate again to allow the pastry to rest and prevent shrinkage before baking
- Pre-heat the oven to 180C and prick the base of your pastry before lining with baking beans and blind baking for 10 minutes
- Remove the beans and bake for another 10 minutes to dry out the pastry and prevent a soggy bottom
- Remove and cool the pastry case without removing it from the fluted case

### Tart filling and topping:

- Start by braising the whole baby leeks in a lidded pan with the knob of butter, a pinch of salt and pepper and enough water to come up halfway over them
- Keep the flame low and after about 8-10 minutes the leeks should be looking quite soft and a little caramelized, but still with a little braising liquid around them - at this point throw in the asparagus spears to braise for another couple of minutes alongside them
- Remove the lid and allow the leeks and asparagus to cool in what's left of the sticky braising liquid
- While that's happening, saute the chopped vegetables and garlic in the butter till just softened
- Once cooled, combine the sauteed chopped vegetables with the rest of the custard ingredients and give it all a good whisk to combine

### Assembly and baking:

- Pre-heat the oven to 160C
- Pour the prepared custard into the cooked pastry case and arrange the braised leeks and asparagus spears on top (this will give you the final look of your tart so take some care here)
- Bake in the oven for 30-35 minutes until just set and lightly browned in places but still a bit wobbly
- Cool to room temperature still in the fluted metal case and then carefully remove and serve
- Scatter with a few herbs or micro greens if you like
- A serrated knife is best for slicing as it stops the whole leeks and asparagus spears from dragging and ruining the look of your beautiful tart

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