

Sunvil Supper Club

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April 2013 - Portuguese custard tarts 'Pasteis de nata'



Ingredients

250g golden caster sugar

4 slices of lemon

2 cinnamon sticks

250ml semi-skimmed milk

30g plain flour

20g cornflour

A few drops vanilla extract

3 egg yolks, plus 1 whole egg

375g ready-rolled puff pastry

Icing sugar and ground cinnamon for dusting

Butter, for greasing the muffin tray

Makes 12 Custard Tarts

Heat the oven to 220C/fan 200C/gas 7 and put a baking sheet in the oven for bottom heat. Grease the muffin tray with butter. To make the filling. Add the sugar, lemon slices and cinnamon sticks into a pan with 125ml water, bring to the boil, and leave to one side.

In a small bowl, mix the flour, cornflour and vanilla with a small amount of the milk to form a smooth paste. Bring the rest of the milk to a boil in a pan, then pour the flour paste in slowly, whisking continuously. Bring the milk mixture to a simmer, whisking until it thickens to a custard consistency.

Remove the cinnamon sticks and lemon slices from the water and sugar mixture. Then add to the milk mixture. Combine the eggs together, add to the mixture, bring back to a simmer and whisk until smooth. Pour the filling into a jug, cover loosely with clingfilm, and allow to cool.

Roll out the puff pastry on a clean work surface lightly dusted with flour and icing sugar. Cut the pastry in half and lay one sheet on top of the other and roll out. Using a cookie cutter, cut out 12 discs (approximately 10cm's wide). Making sure the discs are lightly dusted with flour, press a pastry disc into each of the wells of a buttered muffin tray. Divide the cooled custard filling between the pastry cases.

Bake the tarts for 18-20 minutes on the preheated baking sheet, or until the custard has puffed up and is pale golden-brown, and the pastry is crisp. Allow to cool in the muffin tin before removing. Dust with icing sugar and ground cinnamon to serve.

Pasteis de nata are a Sunvil favourite! The most popular of Portuguese pastries, they are enjoyed around the world. They are made with flaky puff pastry and filled with a caramelized creamy egg custard, dusted with cinnamon. They were first created before the 18th century by Catholic nuns at the Jerónimos Monastery in Belém, Lisbon. Next door to the monastery, was the Casa Pastéis, then a sugar cane refinery and a general store. As a result of the liberal revolution all convents and monasteries were shut down in the 1830's. Someone from the monastery offered to sell the pastries in the general store next door. The pastries became known as 'Pasteis de Belém'. The refinery and shop which now serve as a café, still bake and sell the cakes using the ancient 'secret recipe' passed on by the monastery. Since then 'Pasteis de Belém' from Casa Pastéis continue to be popular with locals and tourists alike.