

## Annie Lou's Chocolate Tarts

*Whether you make tarts or a whole pie, it's up to you! One small apology: This recipe makes 10 to 12 tarts, which isn't ideal because frozen tart shells are now sold in boxes of eight. (Save those leftover shells and make quiche or little pecan pies later?) If you fill a 9-inch pre-baked pie shell and cover it with meringue, bake it 15 minutes or so to brown the meringue. Or, in a hurry, brown the meringue with a pastry-size blowtorch!*

Makes 10 to 12 tarts

10 to 12 frozen 3-inch unbaked pastry tart shells or 1 one frozen 9-inch unbaked pie shell

### **Chocolate filling:**

1 cup granulated sugar

1/3 cup all-purpose flour

1/4 teaspoon salt

2 cups whole milk

2 ounces unsweetened chocolate, chopped

3 large egg yolks

1 to 2 tablespoons unsalted butter

1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

### **Meringue:**

3 large egg whites

1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar

6 tablespoons granulated sugar

1. Place a rack in the center of the oven, and preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Place the frozen tart shells in aluminum pans on a baking pan. Prick them with a fork a few times on the bottom and sides. When the oven is hot, place the pan in the oven. Bake until the shells are golden brown, about 8 to 10 minutes. Remove the shells to a wire rack to cool in the aluminum pans. Reduce the oven temperature to 350 degrees. (Follow package directions if you are pre-baking a 9-inch pie shell.)

2. For the filling, place the sugar, flour, and salt in a small bowl and whisk to combine. Set aside. Pour the milk into a heavy medium-size saucepan over medium heat. Stir and heat until the milk scalds, about 2 minutes. Pull the pan off the heat, and stir in the chocolate and stir until it melts. Pour the sugar mixture gradually into the pan with the milk and chocolate. Whisk to combine.

Place the pan back over the heat, and whisk and cook until the mixture has thickened, about 2 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat.

3. Place the egg yolks in a medium bowl, whisk to break up the yolks. Drop a generous tablespoon of the chocolate mixture into the yolks, and whisk constantly to combine. Turn the egg yolk mixture into the remaining hot chocolate mixture, and whisk constantly until smooth. Place over low heat, and whisk and cook until thick and smooth, about 2 minutes more. Remove the pan from the heat, and stir in the butter and vanilla.

4. Meanwhile, prepare the meringue. Place the egg whites and cream of tartar in a large mixing bowl, and beat on high power with an electric mixer until soft peaks form, about 2 minutes. While the machine is running, pour in the sugar, and continue beating on high until stiff peaks form, about 1 to 2 minutes more.

5. Ladle the chocolate filling into the pre-baked tart shells - or a 9-inch pie shell - and cover with meringue. Make sure the meringue meets the pie crust to completely cover the filling. Place the baking pan in the 350-degree oven and bake until the meringue is golden brown, about 10 to 12 minutes.

6. Remove the pan from the oven. When cool enough to handle, lift the tarts out of their aluminum pans, and place on a rack to cool completely. Serve at once.