

Tarte Flambée (Flammekueche)

Flammkuchen is a speciality of Alsace and the Baden-Württemberg and Rheinland-Pfalz regions on the German-French border. It is composed of bread dough rolled out very thinly in the shape of a rectangle or oval, which is covered with fromage blanc or crème fraîche, thinly sliced onions and lardons.

It is one of the most famous specialties of the region.

Ingredients

For the dough

250g/9oz plain flour, sifted, plus extra for dusting
½ tsp salt
150ml/5fl oz tepid water
2 tbsp sunflower oil

[You can cheat on this part by using ready-to-roll puff pastry.]

For the topping

160g/5½oz smoked bacon lardons
250g/9oz full-fat crème fraîche
1 large onion, thinly sliced
250g/9oz Emmental or Gruyère, or a mixture, grated
whole nutmeg, for grating
salt and freshly ground black pepper
olive oil for dressing

Method

1. To make the dough, mix the flour and salt together in a bowl, then add the water and oil and bring together to make a dough. Transfer to a floured work surface and knead well. Roll the dough into two thin rectangles, each measuring around 25cmx28cm/10inx11in. [Do the same with the puff pastry, if using that.]
2. To make the topping, dry fry the bacon lardons in a frying pan until the fat renders out and they are golden-brown. Drain on kitchen paper.
3. Preheat the oven to 230C/210C Fan/Gas 8 and line two large flat baking trays with baking paper. Place the dough rectangles on the trays.

4. Spread the crème fraîche over the dough leaving a little border around the edges. Scatter over the onion, dot with the lardons and sprinkle liberally with Emmental. Season with salt, pepper and a grating of nutmeg.

5. Bake for 10–12 minutes, or until the base is crisp and the cheese is bubbling. Slide the tarts onto a wooden board and use a pizza cutter to cut them into portions. Serve immediately with drinks or as a light lunch with a green salad, dressed with olive oil.

There are many variations of the original recipe, in terms of the garniture. The standard variations are:

Gratinée: with added Gruyère cheese;

Forestière: with added mushrooms;

Munster: with added Munster cheese;

Sweet: dessert version with apples and cinnamon, or blueberries, and flambéed with Calvados or another sweet liqueur.