

Food & Drink

Alsatian sensation

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In Strasbourg recently I discovered an institution known as the *winstub* – my idea of fun, somewhere you can eat foie gras and *choucroute* and drink Riesling by the glass.

Sadly, it is rather looked

down upon by the locals. I dined in one *winstub* with a local councillor who pulled a face when I ordered onion tart followed by a *choucroute de poisson*. He then grudgingly agreed to have the tart as well on

the grounds he hadn't had one for a long time. He enjoyed it, as I did mine, even if I could see ways of improving it.

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RECIPE

Onion tart

Perhaps best as a light lunch dish, serving six. If deployed as a starter – as they do in Alsace – it will do eight. The bacon is, of course, optional.

Shortcrust pastry

250g plain flour
1 tsp salt
2 egg yolks
125g unsalted butter, cut into small cubes, brought to room temperature
4 tbsp cold water
1 dsp milk

Method

● Sift the flour and mix in a bowl with the salt. Add one egg yolk and the butter and work with your fingertips to form a rough pastry. If using a food mixer, use the beater at slow speed until the ingredients are just amalgamated. Add the cold water and knead gently until the mixture forms a smooth dough. Roll this into a ball and then flatten it gently before wrapping in film and refrigerating for at least an hour.

● Using a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough to form a circle large enough to amply fill a 24cm tart ring. Rolling it on the rolling pin, drop this into the ring, making sure there is a small overhang all the way round. Push it gently into

the corners and make sure there are no holes in the pastry. Fill the tart base with a sheet of greaseproof paper and add a layer of dried beans or suchlike to keep the sides and base in place.

● Bake in a preheated oven (180C) for 20 minutes. Remove the paper and beans and pop back in the oven. Mix the second egg yolk with a dessertspoon of milk and brush the interior surface of the tart with this mixture as soon as you remove it from the oven a second time. This should ensure there are no leaks.

Filling

4 large onions
50g butter
50g smoked bacon, cut into chunky lardons
2 egg yolks
1 egg



100ml milk
200ml double cream
Nutmeg

Method

● Peel and slice the onions thinly. Melt two-thirds of the butter in a heavy sauté pan or casserole and add the onions. Cook them very gently, so that they do not colour but are quite tender, for half an hour.

● Place the lardons in a small saucepan of cold water, bring to the boil and then drain, refreshing them in cold water. Fry the lardons in the remaining butter and then drain again.

● Sprinkle them over the cooked tart base and add the onions, once they have cooled.

● Mix together the egg yolks and egg with the milk and cream and season well with salt, pepper and a little grated nutmeg. Place the tart base on a shelf in the oven (still at 180C) and pour the mixture into the base.

● Slide the tart very carefully into the middle of the oven and pour any remaining mixture so it comes right to the top of the tart.

● Bake for 30 minutes or until the mixture is set. The tart is best served warm but not piping hot with a little salad.