

Recipe: Caramel Apple Tart

Total time: 1 hour to 1 hours 15 minutes

2 sticks unsalted butter (1/2 pound)

3/4 cup sugar

Grated rind of 1 orange

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom

2 tablespoons brandy

1 3/4 pounds small apples, peeled, cored and quartered

10 sheets phyllo

Whipped cream or vanilla ice cream, if desired.

1. Melt 1 stick of butter in an ovenproof skillet approximately 9 inches in diameter on the bottom and 12 on top. Remove from heat and stir in sugar, orange rind, lemon juice, cardamom and brandy and stir until sugar dissolves.

2. Arrange the apple quarters, tightly packed, in concentric circles on sugar mixture. Place the pan over medium-high heat and bring to a simmer; cook until the butter-sugar mixture takes on golden color and apples are soft, 20 to 40 minutes, depending on the size of apples. Baste apple occasionally with syrup. Watch carefully, so it doesn't burn. Remove from heat.

3. Place rack in the middle of the oven. Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

4. Melt remaining butter. Open package of phyllo and remove 10 sheets, placing them in a pile. Trace a 12-inch circle on the phyllo pile and cut through all sheets to create 10 circles. Cover with a damp cloth. (Remaining phyllo will last about a week in airtight bag)

5. Brush one sheet of phyllo with melted butter and place on top of the apples, buttered side up. Repeat until all 10 sheets are used. Cut a 1/2 inch hole in center of phyllo sheets to let the steam escape. Carefully tuck the overlapping edges of phyllo into sides of skillet and bake until browned, 10 to 15 minutes.

5. Remove skillet from oven and cool for 10 minutes. Run a sharp knife along the sides to separate tart from skillet. Place a serving tray on top and flip so that apples are on the top. Cut while still warm and, if desired, serve with whipped cream or ice cream. The dish can also be made a few hours ahead. Do not flip tart until just before serving so phyllo does not get soggy. Reheat at 350 degrees to warm through.

Yield: 6 servings.