

For the love of tarts

Author wants you to be enchanted by sweet, savory pastries



GRACE BEAHM/STAFF

Holly Herrick, Charleston cook, food writer and author, says she had a lot of fun working on her new cookbook.

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Holly Herrick calls tarts “the sexier cousins of pies,” but not simply because the word has a double meaning.

By their nature, tarts tend to be more petite. They’re also more shapely, meaning that they can be round, square or rectangular. Many are very revealing of their ingredients, like a pizza.

And they can be either savory or sweet, which makes them attractive to a range of tastes.

Author Herrick expresses her feelings through more than 50 recipes in the newly published “Tart Love: Sassy, Savory, and Sweet” (Gibbs-Smith, \$24.99).

It’s the third book and counting for Herrick, a former restaurant critic and food writer for The Post and Courier who has called Charleston home for more than a decade.

Tarts weren’t always Herrick’s thing. The first step in her journey was falling in love with her mother-in-law’s pie pastry, which Herrick could never quite duplicate.

But Dori, as she was called, did inspire Herrick to go to Le Cordon Bleu cooking school in Paris. So Herrick did become, as she says, “confident” with pastry.

After completing school, she and her



husband moved to the French countryside. There, another mentor emerged and Herrick had a second realization about tarts, which she was seeing everywhere in France.

“There was a whole broad universe of savory tart potential,” she says. “I made them a lot down there because it’s a whole meal, with a salad.”

A lot of it had to do with meeting Simone, who lived in a nearby village.

“She used her garden as a palette for her tarts. I do the same except I go to the

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HELENE DUJARDIN

Peanut butter and chocolate cozy up for this Peanut Butter Fluff and Chocolate Tart.

Recipes

Try these: Peanut Butter Fluff and Chocolate Tart and Sage Green Apple and Aged Cheddar Tart. **4D**

Also, find these recipes and more online at **postandcourier.com/food**.

Peanut Butter Fluff and Chocolate Tart

Serves 8

“This is heartbreakingly good and beautiful to look at! Its richness and pumpkin-colored hue are perfect for fall and winter indulgences.”

— Holly Herrick

Ingredients

Equipment needed: One 9x1-inch round tart pan with a removable bottom

For Chocolate Crust:

1 stick soft butter
3 cups crumbled chocolate graham cracker crust

For Filling:

1 cup creamy peanut butter
4 ounces (½ cup) cream cheese
¾ cup marshmallow cream (suggest Kraft’s Jet-Puffed brand)
¼ cup light brown sugar

For Topping:

½ cup whipping cream
3 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla
½ cup semi-sweet chocolate chunks or chips

Directions

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

To prepare the crust, crush the graham crackers with a rolling pin and continue until they are about the size of tiny peas. Combine the cracker crumbs and butter in a small bowl, using your hands, until thoroughly mixed. Press the crust evenly into the bottom of the tart pan, pressing the crumbs into the edges. It’s OK if it looks a little rough and rustic. Fill with parchment paper and beans or pie weights, and blind bake for 25 minutes. Remove parchment and pie weights and continue baking another 20 minutes, or until the crust starts to dry out and crisp. Remove from oven and set aside to cool. Chill to refrigerate. (Note: You can make the crust a day ahead and refrigerate, tightly wrapped.)

Meanwhile, prepare the filling. Combine the peanut butter, cream cheese, marshmallow cream and brown sugar in a medium-size bowl. Whisk to combine, or blend with a hand-held mixer until very fluffy and smooth.

To assemble, add the filling to the completely cooled crust. Smooth with a spatula to the edges of the tart. Refrigerate for several hours, or overnight if desired. If serving within the next few hours, proceed to whip the cream, sugar and vanilla together in a cold medium-size bowl until firm peaks have formed. All at once, place the whipped cream on top of the tart. Spread with a spatula to level it out, leaving ½ inch visible border of the peanut butter filling. Sprinkle chocolate chunks or chips over the whipped cream. Chill for at least 1 hour and up to 3 hours before serving.

Cookbook focuses on ‘sexier cousins of pies’

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farmers market,” says Herrick.

The principal difference between pies and tarts is form, says Herrick. While the standard pie pan is a 9-inch round and a couple of inches deep, tart pans are all shapes and sizes, are more shallow and have crimped edges.

The form mandates the function and filling of tarts, Herrick says. “I like to think of it as matching the right shoe with the right dress.”

For example, for one of her tarts in which apple slices overlay each other like dominoes, a rectangular pan works best. It would be tricky cutting through the fruit and crust in a round pan, she says.

As for crusts, Herrick offers her simple “master” recipes for both sweet and savory doughs and a number of tips for working with them.

They are “short” pastry with a high ratio of fat (butter) to flour, which makes for a crumbly, flaky crust. She also calls for White Lily flour because of its lower gluten content; excess gluten can toughen pastry.

Herrick says home bakers shouldn’t fear making crust. The keys are cold butter, ice-cold water, a light touch, and resting and chilling the dough.

“It’s a little bit like learning to drive. Learn the rules, practice and you’ll actually learn to enjoy it. And don’t speed!”

Herrick adds pizzazz to her

pastry by incorporating herbs, cheese, olives and even crackers into the doughs. “It was really fun to play with that and to get those flavors in every bite,” she says.

For those recipes that call for puff pastry, do as Herrick does — don’t make life overwhelming. Buy ready-made puff pastry from the grocery store.

“Tart Love” does give a nod to stouter fare as well: One chapter features a Shepherd’s Pie and various meat potpies with fall-friendly ingredients. Pocket pies such as Fiesty Fried Shrimp and Grits Pockets are covered in another — the pockets can be fried or baked.

Quiches get their due, too. Roasted Grape Tomato and Pimento Cheese is a siren call to the South, while the Hungry Man quiche with three meats and three cheeses playfully challenges an old stereotype.

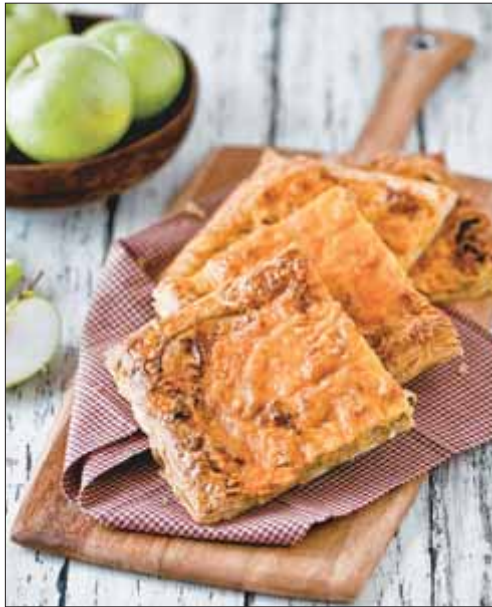
“They say real men don’t eat quiche. That’s a lie,” says Herrick.

The author says she wants people to get comfortable with pastry and the many possibilities of fillings, and tried to make the book both practical and whimsical.

She tested all the recipes in her home kitchen and, during the process, became a totally engrossed “tart-head.”

“I really had fun with this book,” she says.

Teresa Taylor is the food editor. Reach her at 937-4886.



HELENE DUJARDIN

Sage Green Apple and Aged Cheddar Tart

Makes 9 appetizer portions or 4 entrée portions

“In this tart, the play is on the perennial pairing of apples and cheese. The edgy tartness of Granny Smith apples is ideal with a best-quality aged, extra sharp cheddar cheese. Sage seals the deal with its effortlessly earthy touch. ... Serve it very warm, while the cheese is still gooey and gently oozing from the edges of the tart wedges. This tart makes the perfect appetizer companion to a sturdy red wine, or pair it with a salad to make a complete meal.”

— Holly Herrick

Ingredients

Equipment needed: parchment paper, baking sheet
 1 sheet Pepperidge Farm puff pastry, thawed per box directions
 1 egg wash (yolk, pinch of salt, a splash of water blended together)
 2 Granny Smith apples, halved and cored
 2 tablespoons butter
 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
 Pinch kosher salt or sea salt
 1 tablespoon dried sage leaves, plus extra for garnish
 3 cups grated extra sharp yellow cheddar cheese

Directions

Thaw pastry at room temperature according to package directions (about 40 minutes). Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Arrange thawed puff pastry on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Refrigerate while preparing the filling. Prepare the egg wash and set aside.

Cut the apples, skin-on, so thin that you can practically see through them. Heat the butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add apples, pepper, salt and sage. Toss to coat, then cook, tossing occasionally, for 5 minutes, or until the apples have begun to soften and lightly brown. Remove from heat, transfer to a bowl, and refrigerate to let cool.

Meanwhile, grate cheese at a medium-size grate. When the apples are cool, toss half of the cheese with the apples. Arrange this mixture in the center of the puff pastry sheet, spreading gently and evenly to the edges, leaving ½ inch border of naked pastry. Top apples evenly with the remaining cheese, taking care not to drizzle over the border. Brush the naked border lightly with egg wash.

Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the pastry is fully puffed and a rich golden brown and the cheese is melted and bubbly. Let cool for 10 minutes, then serve immediately.

For appetizer portions, cut through the tart in 3 bars vertically and horizontally. For entrée portions, cut the tart into four even squares. Garnish with a final pass of ground black pepper and a light drizzle of dried sage if desired.