

MacNean Frangipane Mince Pies with Brandy Butter

These can be made up to three days in advance or frozen and refreshed in a moderate oven set at 180°C (350°F/gas mark 4) for 8–10 minutes before glazing.

For the brandy butter:

150g (5oz) icing sugar, sifted
100g (4oz) butter, softened
3 tbsp brandy (preferably Cognac)

For the pastry:

175g (6oz) plain flour, plus extra for dusting
100g (4oz) cold butter, diced
50g (2oz) caster sugar
1 egg yolk, plus beaten egg to glaze
½ tbsp cream
½ tsp lemon juice

For the frangipane:

100g (4oz) butter
100g (4oz) caster sugar
2 large eggs
100g (4oz) ground almonds
1 tbsp plain flour
1 tbsp dark rum
1 vanilla pod, split in half lengthways and seeds scraped out

For the filling and topping:

1 x 400g (14oz) jar of mincemeat
25g (1oz) flaked almonds
apricot jam, to glaze
icing sugar, for dusting



1. To make the brandy butter, cream together the icing sugar and butter. Beat in 1 tablespoon of boiling water and the brandy until smooth. Put in a dish, cover and chill until needed.

2. Make the pastry, put the flour, butter and caster sugar in a food processor and blend for 20 seconds. Add the egg yolk, cream and lemon juice and blend just until the pastry comes together. Wrap in cling film and chill for 1 hour.
3. Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/gas mark 6).
4. To make the frangipane, put the butter and caster sugar in a large bowl. Using a hand-held mixer, beat until soft and creamy. Scrape down the sides, then add the eggs and continue to beat. Add the ground almonds, flour, rum and vanilla seeds and mix briefly.
5. Roll the pastry out thinly on a lightly floured work surface and cut into 18 x 6.5cm (2½in) circles and use these to line the bun tins. Spoon a teaspoon of mincemeat into each tartlet and top with the frangipane. There is no need to spread the mixture flat, as it will level out in the oven (but don't overfill the tins). Sprinkle a few flaked almonds on top of each one. Bake in the oven for 15–17 minutes, until cooked through and light golden, watching carefully. Remove the mince pies from the tins and allow to cool a little on a wire rack.
6. Dilute the apricot jam with a little water and bring to the boil, then brush the top of each warm tartlet with this glaze. These are best served warm with a light dusting of icing sugar.