

Lucas Carton Fig Tart with Caramelized Figs

This was a signature dessert at Lucas Carton in Paris when I worked there, and it was a favorite of Chef Alain Senderens. It's a simple dessert, an open-faced tart that showcases the spicy, musky flavor of the Black Mission fig. I have to admit that I would bitch and moan every time I had to make this dessert, because it has to be "brûléed" a la minute, and you have to do it just right, or you'll end up burning the puff pastry base. The best technique is to sprinkle sugar on one area of the tart with one hand and immediately caramelize it with a blowtorch that you hold in your other hand. If you sprinkle the whole tart with sugar first, the sugar sinks into the figs and becomes difficult to caramelize.

Makes 8 servings

Components

Puff Pastry Rounds
Spiced Fig Pulp

Special Equipment

3-inch round pastry cutter; blowtorch

Perfect Match

2008 Zind-Humbrecht Riesling Brand Grand Cru, Alsace, France

Puff Pastry Rounds

1 lb (454 g) Puff Pastry (homemade or store-bought)
Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (191°C).
2. On a lightly floured work surface, roll the puff pastry out to a thickness of 1/8 inch. Using a 3-inch round pastry cutter, cut out 8 rounds from the dough and prick them well with the tines of a fork. Place the rounds on a half-sheet pan and place a piece of parchment paper, then another half-sheet pan, on top. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until lightly browned. Remove the pan from the oven and preheat the broiler. Take off the top sheet pan and parchment paper. Dust the rounds with confectioners' sugar and broil until the sugar caramelizes, about 3 to 5 minutes. Cool the rounds on the sheet pan, set on a wire rack.

Spiced Fig Pulp

20 (800 g/28.2 oz) ripe Black Mission figs
Pinch of Chinese five-spice powder
Pinch of ground cinnamon

Cut each fig in half and, using a small spoon, scoop the pulp into a bowl. Mash the pulp up a bit with a fork and stir in the spices.

Assembly

12 Black Mission figs
1/2 cup firmly packed (100 g/3.5 oz) light brown sugar

Spoon a rounded 1/4 cup (90 g/3.17 oz) of the Spiced Fig Pulp onto a Puff Pastry Round and smooth it into a mound with a small, offset metal spatula. Repeat with the remaining Puff Pastry Rounds and fig pulp. Thinly slice the figs and lay the slices over each dome, overlapping the slices slightly and making sure that the puff pastry bases are covered, or they may burn. Holding some of the sugar in the fingers of your left hand and a blowtorch in your right hand, sprinkle some sugar onto the figs and immediately caramelize it with the torch. Continue working your way around the tart until all of the figs are caramelized. Serve immediately.