

Strawberry & Cream Galette

I originally created this recipe to put in our local chronicle here in Karamea, but with berry season upon us and Christmas just around the corner I thought it would be a good opportunity to share my Strawberry and Cream Galette on the website too so more people can enjoy it this summer. The sumptuous dessert is worthy of a place on the Christmas table or alternatively would make the ideal addition to any festive dinner party.

A galette is just a fancy name for a free form pie, and although they may sound posh, galettes are simple to make, with the whole aim being to keep them looking rough and rustic.

Strawberries and cream are a classic combination, and here melt in your mouth pastry encases a sweet vanilla-spiked cream cheese filling which is then topped with a generous amount of strawberries. A fresh yet decadent dessert best served warm with French vanilla ice cream.

Serves 6-8

Ingredients

For the pastry

- 1 ½ cups white flour
- 3 tablespoons icing sugar
- 100 grams cold butter, cut into cubes
- 1 free range egg
- ¼ cup softened cream cheese (taken from a 250 gram tub of cream cheese - the remaining will get used in the filling)

For the filling

- 500 grams fresh strawberries
- 2 tablespoons raw sugar
- 2 teaspoons cornflour
- Remaining cream cheese from the 250 gram tub (minus the ¼ cup used in the pastry)
- 2 tablespoons icing sugar
- 1 ½ teaspoons cornflour
- 1 ½ teaspoons vanilla bean extract (I used Queen's vanilla extract with seeds)
- Raw sugar for sprinkling on top

Method

1. Make the pastry. Place the flour and icing sugar into a food processor. Briefly blitz to combine. Add the butter and blitz again until butter is incorporated. Lightly beat the egg with a fork and set a tablespoon worth aside for brushing over the pastry later. Mix the remaining egg with ¼ cup softened cream cheese. Turn the food processor back on and pour the egg mix in, until the pastry just comes together. The mixture should stay together when a small piece is squeezed between the fingers – if it needs more liquid just add more cream cheese, a teaspoon full at a time. Turn the pastry onto a floured board and gently shape into a thick flat circle. Cover and place in the fridge to rest for half an hour while you make the rest of the galette.
2. Hull the strawberries and cut into quarters. Place into a bowl with the raw sugar and the first measure of cornflour. Mix well and set aside to macerate while the pastry rests.

3. Preheat oven to 180C. Mix the remaining cream cheese with the second measure of icing sugar, second measure of cornflour and vanilla bean extract, ensuring everything is combined and that there are no lumps.
4. Remove the pastry from the fridge and place on a floured board. Evenly roll out to form a circle roughly 30 cm in diameter. Line an oven tray with baking paper and carefully place the rolled pastry onto it. Spoon the cream cheese mixture into the centre, and using the back of the spoon spread into an even layer, leaving a 5 cm rim of uncovered pastry all the way around the edge. Place the strawberries on top of the cream cheese. Try not to bring too much juice from the berries onto the filling - I like to use a slotted spoon to help minimise this. It will seem like a lot of strawberries but just keep piling them up towards the centre of the galette knowing that all that fruit will cook down and complement the rich cream cheese layer.
5. Fold the pastry edges over onto the outside edge of fruit. You don't need to be pretty here, remember rustic is key! Brush the saved egg over the pastry and sprinkle with an extra bit of raw sugar.
6. Bake in the centre of the oven for 35 – 45 minutes until the pastry is golden and the fruit is cooked through. Remove from the oven and rest for 10 minutes or so before cutting to allow the filling to set slightly. If you would like a glossy top, pour a teaspoon of maple syrup over the strawberries just before serving.

Pastry making 101: Pastry is simple to make and can be whipped up in less than 5 minutes, especially if you use a food processor. But there are a couple of things to remember when making it. The first is to keep everything as cold as possible, so don't remove the butter from the fridge until just before you need it and keep the pastry away from any sunny windowsills while you roll it out. Handling it too much could make it tough. To make pastry without a food processor, quickly rub the butter into the dry ingredients using the tips of your fingers. Add the liquid and use a butter knife to mix. Always rest your pastry in the fridge before baking to ensure a buttery short consistency.