



Asparagus Tart

This easy, delicious, make-ahead spring appetizer is at its best served warm, within an hour of baking, while the pastry is crisp and the cheese still yummy-soft. But it's also delicious a few hours later if you want to get the cooking over with before the party starts. Tarragon isn't in most gardens in the spring, but chives or mint are equally excellent.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 CUP (4 oz) goat cheese, at room temperature
- 1 LARGE egg, lightly beaten, at room temperature
- 1 LARGE garlic clove, finely grated or minced
- 1½ TBSP chopped fresh tarragon leaves, chives or
- 1 TSP dried thyme
- ½ TBSP finely grated lemon zest
- ½ TSP fine sea salt, plus more for sprinkling
- PINCH of freshly grated nutmeg
- 1 CUP crème fraîche, at room temperature (or Greek yoghurt)
- 1 SHEET puff pastry, thawed in the refrigerator
- 12-14 STALKS thin asparagus, woody ends trimmed
- Extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 TBSP grated Parmesan
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1½ OZ (about ½ CUP) shaved Parmesan

SERVES 8

METHOD

Preheat oven to 425°F. Grease a rimmed cookie sheet.

In a medium bowl, mash together the goat cheese, egg, garlic, chopped tarragon, lemon zest, salt, and nutmeg until smooth. Beat in the crème fraîche until smooth. (Or substitute an equal amount of plain Greek yoghurt or sour cream with a bit of honey to sweeten.)

On a lightly floured surface, roll out puff pastry to a 13-by-11-inch rectangle. Transfer the dough to the cookie sheet. With a sharp knife, lightly score a 1/2-inch border around the edges of the puff pastry.

Spread the crème fraîche mixture evenly inside the scored border. Lay the asparagus spears on top and brush them with olive oil.

MAKE AHEAD: You can assemble the tart to this point 1 day in advance. Loosely cover and store in the refrigerator. Bring to room temperature then proceed with the recipe.

Sprinkle some salt and the grated Parmesan over the asparagus.

Bake until the pastry is puffed and golden, 20-25 minutes. Allow the tart to cool on the cookie sheet for at least 15 minutes. Then sprinkle black pepper and the shaved Parmesan over top. Drizzle a little oil over all and garnish with whole tarragon leaves or chives. Cut and serve. Delicious served warm from the oven or at room temperature: the tart sits well for up to 4 hours after baking.

