

THE Daring KITCHEN



THE DARING BAKERS' NOVEMBER, 2010 CHALLENGE: CROSTATATA

Well [Lori](#) - you've managed to make 1000's of bakers from around the world absolutely fall in love with doughnuts! What a fun October and so many of us learned many different things from your challenge. Some of us got a chance to work again with our nemesis - yeast - and we kicked butt! Some of us learned that frying at home doesn't have to be dangerous and chance burning the house down! Some of us learned that a baked doughnut is *just as good* as a fried doughnut! And what we ALL learned was that the creativity and talent of our Daring Bakers is ASTOUNDING. To say the very least. ☺

Thank you! Thank you so much for all of your hard work in preparing a fantastic challenge and guiding us along the way!! ☺

I have a request, if ya'll don't mind? Each holiday season (Nov. - Jan.) many of our FoodTalk articles on the front page of the DK are directed towards homemade edible gift ideas. And although our very talented authors search the interwebs high and low for the best recipes and ideas, they really like to include many of those recipes and ideas found on our own Daring Kitchen members' blogs! So you might see an email from one of us asking your permission to highlight your recipe, your photo and your blog in the article. We are asking that, if you will allow us that permission, to write back as soon as possible to let us know. We won't feature recipes or photos without the permission of the blog owner, so we really need ya'll to make sure you have your most current email address in your profile and that you write us back. Pretty please? We would be honored and most grateful to include as many links as we can fit into each article! ☺

xoxo

Hello everybody / *Ciao a tutti* (the Italian way). I am [Simona](#) from [briciole](#) and I have the honor of being your hostess for the November edition of the Daring Bakers' Challenge.

This month, I am inviting you to make *crostata* (tart), an Italian dessert. The base of a *crostata* is *pasta frolla* (or *pastafrolla*), sweet short crust pastry (or sweet tart dough) made of flour, sugar, butter and eggs. *Pasta frolla* is versatile: it provides the base to make *crostata* with fruit preserves, pastry cream, fresh fruit, *ricotta*, and other ingredients, and, by itself, it makes very nice cookies.

As a child in Italy, my favorite *crostata* variation was that with pastry cream. Nobody I knew made it, so when I wanted a slice; I got it from a bakery. My aunt Lucia made tarts with her homemade jam and baked them in oversize pans (which originally were metal film cans). My father and my cousins loved them, while I preferred the *crostatine* (cookie-size *crostate*, or tartlets) that she made with the leftover dough. I never asked my aunt for her recipe, so my version does not rely on her wisdom.

My intention with this challenge is to introduce you to *pasta frolla* and make you experiment with it in preparing a *crostata* of your choice.

Recipe Source: There are many recipes for *pasta frolla* and different ideas about how to make it. I will give you two versions that I have been using for some time. They have been inspired by those in the book *La scienza in cucina e l'arte di mangiare bene* by Pellegrino Artusi (1820-1911). The book was first published in 1891, and is available in English translation as *Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well* (further details are given in the Additional Information section).

Blog-checking lines: The 2010 November Daring Bakers' challenge was hosted by Simona of briciole. She chose to challenge Daring Bakers' to make *pasta frolla* for a *crostata*. She used her own experience as a source, as well as information from Pellegrino Artusi's *Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*.

Posting Date: November 27, 2010

Mandatory Items: You must make the *pasta frolla* using either one of the recipes (Version 1 or Version 2) that I have provided here and use it as the base layer for a *crostata*.

Variations allowed: You can make a *crostata* with fruit preserves (traditional) or pastry cream or any other filling of your choice. I have provided some ideas for fillings to help you. Here's where you can be creative!

Preparation time:

The following times are approximate, as the time depends on your dexterity to cut the butter and work the dough (which should not be overworked) and your familiarity with the rolling pin.

- Preparing *pasta frolla* with a food processor takes 10-15 minutes
- Preparing *pasta frolla* without a food processor takes 20-25 minutes
- Allow the *pasta frolla* to chill thoroughly. I recommend at least two hours.
- Rolling the *pasta frolla* and assembling the *crostata* takes 25-30 minutes, if you use fruit preserves.
- Baking the *crostata* takes about 35 minutes, if you use fruit preserves.

Preparation time for other types of *crostata* vary. For example, making *crostata* with pastry cream requires the time to make pastry cream (25-30 minutes) and a longer baking time. If you make *crostata* with fresh fruit, you'll need time to prepare the fruit, besides the time needed to prepare pastry cream. In this case, you assemble the *crostata* after the crust is baked.

Equipment required:

- bowls, as needed
- fork
- knife
- bench (or pastry) scraper
- rolling pin
- pastry brush
- 9 or 9.5-inch [23-24 cm] fluted round tart pan with removable bottom, about 1 inch [2.5 cm] high. (Note: If you don't have a tart pan with a removable bottom, don't worry! You can make *crostata* using a 9-inch cake pan or even a 9-inch pie plate. See the Additional Information section for information on using different pans.)



- a food processor is useful, but not required

Version 1 of pasta frolla

Ingredients:

- 1/2 c. minus 1 tablespoon [105 ml, 100 g, 3 ½ oz] superfine sugar (see [Note 1](#)) or a scant 3/4 cup [180ml, 90g, 3 oz] of powdered sugar
- 1 and 3/4 cup [420 ml, 235 g, 8 1/4 oz.] unbleached all-purpose flour
- a pinch of salt
- 1 stick [8 tablespoons / 4 oz. / 115 g] cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
- grated zest of half a lemon (*you could also use vanilla sugar as an option, see [Note 2](#)*)
- 1 large egg and 1 large egg yolk, lightly beaten in a small bowl

Note 1: Superfine sugar is often also referred to as ultrafine, baker's sugar or caster sugar. It's available in most supermarkets. If you cannot find "superfine" sugar, you can make your own by putting some regular granulated sugar in a food processor or blender and letting it run until the sugar is finely ground.

Note 2: There are different ways of making vanilla sugar. I keep vanilla beans in a jar half-filled with sugar until I need to use them, for example, to make vanilla ice cream. After I remove the split bean from the custard that will go into the ice cream maker, I rinse it, dry it and put it back in the jar with sugar.

Making pasta frolla by hand:

1. Whisk together sugar, flour and salt in a bowl.
2. Rub or cut the butter into the flour until the mixture has the consistency of coarse crumbs. You can do this in the bowl or on your work surface, using your fingertips or an implement of choice.



3. Make a well in the center of the mounded flour and butter mixture and pour the beaten eggs into it (reserve about a teaspoon of the egg mixture for glazing purposes later on – place in the refrigerator, covered, until ready to use).
4. Add the lemon zest to your flour/butter/egg mixture.
5. Use a fork to incorporate the liquid into the solid ingredients, and then use your fingertips.
6. Knead lightly just until the dough comes together into a ball.
7. Shape the dough into a flat disk and wrap in plastic wrap. Place the dough in the refrigerator and chill for at least two hours. You can refrigerate the dough overnight.



Making pasta frolla with a food processor:

1. Put sugar, flour, salt, and lemon zest in the food processor and pulse a few times to mix.
2. Add butter and pulse a few times, until the mixture has the consistency of coarse meal.
3. Empty food processor's bowl onto your work surface
4. See step 3 above and continue as explained in the following steps (minus the lemon zest, which you have already added).

Variation for Version 1 of pasta frolla:

If you want, you can make the *pasta frolla* using a combination of all-purpose flour and whole-wheat pastry flour.

If you choose to try this variation, use 1 cup [240 ml, 135 g, 4 3/4 oz.] unbleached all-purpose flour and 3/4 cup [180 ml, 100 g, 3.5 oz.] whole-wheat pastry flour.

Version 2 of pasta frolla

In this version of *pasta frolla*, I have played with different kinds of flours, using almond, whole-grain barley and, most recently, coconut flour instead of some of the all-purpose flour. If you want to try a different version of *pasta frolla* that uses some flours that you wouldn't normally use, this is a good recipe to try. All the flours listed below (whole-wheat pastry, almond flour, coconut flour and barley flour) are available at health food stores. You may even find them at well-stocked supermarkets.

The preparation for this version of *pasta frolla* is very similar to the preparation for Version 1.

Ingredients

- 1/3 cup [80 ml, 75 g, 2 2/3 oz.] superfine sugar or 1/2 cup [120ml, 60 g, 2 oz] powdered sugar (see Note 1.)
- 1/2 cup [120 ml, 65 g, 2 3/8 oz.] unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup [120ml, 65 g, 2 1/4 oz.] whole-wheat pastry flour
- 1/4 cup [60ml, 28 g, 1 oz] almond flour, or almond meal, or coconut flour
- 1/4 cup [60ml, 28 g, 1 oz.] whole-grain barley flour or unbleached all-purpose flour
- a pinch of salt
- 6 tablespoons[90ml, 85 g, 3 oz] cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract (*you can also use vanilla sugar; see Note 2.*)

Note 1: Superfine sugar is often also referred to as ultrafine, baker's sugar or caster sugar. It's available in most supermarkets. If you cannot find "superfine" sugar, you can make your own by putting some regular granulated sugar in a food processor or blender and letting it run until the sugar is finely ground.

Note 2: There are different ways of making vanilla sugar. I keep vanilla beans in a jar half-filled with sugar until I need to use them, for example, to make vanilla ice cream. After I remove the split bean from the custard that will go into the ice cream maker, I rinse it, dry it and put it back in the jar with sugar.

Directions:

By hand:

1. Whisk together sugar, flours and salt in a bowl.
2. Rub or cut the butter into the sugar and flour mixture until it has the consistency of coarse crumbs. You can do this in the bowl or on your work surface, using your fingertips or an implement of choice.
3. Make a well in the center of the flour and butter mixture and pour the beaten egg and vanilla extract into it.
4. Use a fork to incorporate the liquid into mixture and then use your fingertips.
5. Knead lightly just until the dough comes together into a ball.
6. Shape the dough into a flat disk and wrap in plastic wrap. Place the dough in the refrigerator and chill for at least two hours. You can refrigerate the dough overnight.

With a food processor:

1. Put sugar, flour, and salt in the bowl of the food processor and pulse a few times to mix.
2. Add butter and pulse a few times until the mixture has the consistency of coarse meal.
3. Empty food processor's bowl onto your work surface.



4. Make a well in the center of the mounded flour and butter mixture and pour the beaten egg and vanilla extract into it.
5. Use a fork to incorporate the liquid into the solid ingredients then use your fingertips.
6. Knead lightly just until the dough comes together into a ball.
7. Shape the dough into a flat disk and wrap in plastic wrap. Place the dough in the refrigerator and chill for at least two hours. You can refrigerate the dough overnight.

Ideas for Filling for Your Crostata

Whether you choose to make Version 1 or 2 of the *pasta frolla*, there are numerous fillings that you can choose from for your *crostata*. I am suggesting some filling for you here (and including assemblage and baking instructions). But be brave and creative and see what you can come up with!

Crostata di Marmellata (crostata with a jam filling using Version 1 pasta frolla)

If you choose to make a *crostata* with a jam filling, you will need:

- 1 and 3/4 cups [415ml, 600 gm, 21 oz] of jam or fruit preserves, whatever flavor you like (Note: I use my homemade fruit preserves, which have a low sugar content. I recommend you choose a good quality product, made with mostly fruit.)

Assembling and baking the crostata di marmellata:

1. Heat the oven to 375°F [190°C/gas mark 5].
2. Take the *pasta frolla* out of the fridge, unwrap it and cut away ¼ of the dough. Reserve this dough to make the lattice top of the *crostata*. Refrigerate this dough while you work on the tart base.
3. To help roll the *crostata* dough, keep the dough on top of the plastic wrap that you had it wrapped in. This can help rolling the dough and can also help when transferring the dough to your pan. You can also use parchment paper for this. However, you can also roll the dough directly on a work surface if you prefer.
4. Lightly dust the top of the dough and your work surface (if you're rolling directly on a work surface) with flour. Keep some flour handy to dust the dough as you go along.
5. If the dough is very firm, start by pressing the dough with the rolling pin from the middle to each end, moving the rolling pin by a pin's width each time; turn the dough 180 degrees and repeat; when it softens, start rolling.
6. Roll the dough into a circle about 1/8th inch (3 mm) thick.
7. If you used the plastic wrap or parchment paper as rolling surface, flip dough over the pan, centering it, and delicately press it all around so the corners are well covered. Peel away the plastic wrap.



8. Trim the excess dough hanging over the edges of the pan. Press the remaining dough around the border into the sides of the pan making sure the border is an even thickness all the way around.

9. Prick the bottom of the dough with a fork in several places.



10. Take out of the fridge the reserved *pasta frolla* you had cut away earlier. Roll it with your pin and cut into strips or use cookie cutters to make small shapes (this is not traditional, but it looks cute); or roll with your hands into ropes.
11. Spread the jam or fruit preserves evenly over the bottom of the *crostata*.



12. Use the prepared strips or rolls of dough to make a lattice over the surface, or decorate with the cut shapes. (Note: You can use dough scraps to make cookies: see the Additional Information section for some pointers)
13. Brush the border and strips of dough with the reserved beaten eggs. You can add a drop or two of water to the beaten eggs if you don't have enough liquid.
14. Put the tart in the oven and bake for 25 minutes.
15. After 25 minutes, check the tart and continue baking until the tart is of a nice golden hue. (Note: Every oven is different. In my oven it took 34 minutes to bake the tart until golden.)
16. When done, remove the tart from the oven and let cool. If you have used a tart pan with a removable bottom, then release the tart base from the fluted tart ring. Make sure the tart is completely cool before slicing and serving.



Crostata con la Crema (crostata with pastry cream filling using Version 1 pasta frolla)



If you choose to make a *crostata* with pastry cream filling, you will need:

- One batch of pastry cream (Note: For the recipe that I used, see #5 of the Additional Information section. Prepare the pastry cream in advance of assembling the *crostata*.)

Assembling and baking the crostata con la crema:

1. Heat the oven to 350°F [180°C/gas mark 4].
2. Take the *pasta frolla* out of the fridge, unwrap it and cut away $\frac{1}{4}$ of the dough. Reserve this dough to make the lattice top of the *crostata*. Refrigerate this dough while you work on the tart base.
3. To help roll the *crostata* dough, keep the dough on top of the plastic wrap that you had it wrapped in. This can help rolling the dough and can also help when transferring the dough to your pan. You can also use parchment paper for this. However, you can also roll the dough directly on a work surface if you prefer.
4. Lightly dust the top of the dough and your work surface (if you're rolling directly on a work surface) with flour. Keep some flour handy to dust the dough as you go along.
5. If the dough is very firm, start by pressing the dough with the rolling pin from the middle to each end, moving the rolling pin by a pin's width each time; turn the dough 180 degrees and repeat; when it softens, start rolling.
6. Roll the dough into a circle about $\frac{1}{8}$ th inch (3 mm) thick.
7. If you used the plastic wrap or parchment paper as rolling surface, flip dough over the pan, centering it, and delicately press it all around so the corners are well covered. Peel away the plastic wrap.
8. Trim the excess dough hanging over the edges of the pan. Press the remaining dough around the border into the sides of the pan making sure the border is an even thickness all the way around.
9. Prick the bottom of the dough with a fork in several places.
10. Take out of the fridge the reserved *pasta frolla* you had cut away earlier. Roll it with your pin and cut into strips or use cookie cutters to make small shapes (this is not traditional, but it looks cute); or roll with your hands into ropes.
11. Instead of jam or fruit preserves, cover the bottom of the *crostata* crust evenly with the pastry cream.
12. Use the prepared strips or rolls of dough to make a lattice over the surface, or decorate with the cut shapes. (Note: You can use dough scraps to make cookies: see the Additional Information section for some pointers)

13. Brush the border and strips of dough with the reserved beaten eggs. You can add a drop or two of water to the beaten eggs if you don't have enough liquid.
14. Put the tart in the oven and bake for 30 minutes.
15. After 35 minutes, check the tart, and continue baking until the tart is of a nice golden hue. (Note: Every oven is different. In my oven it took 45 minutes to bake the tart until golden.)
16. When done, remove the tart from the oven and let cool. If you have used a tart pan with a removable bottom, then release the tart base from the fluted tart ring. Make sure the tart is completely cool before slicing and serving.

Crostata di Frutta Fresca (crostata with fresh fruit using Version 1 or 2 of pasta frolla)

Note: This filling variation involves a process called "blind-baking". (If you're not familiar with blind-baking, see #4 in the Additional Information section for an explanation and a video on blind-baking.)



In its simplest form, a *crostata* with fresh fruit has 3 components:

- the *pasta frolla* base, blind-baked
- a layer of pastry cream
- a layer of fruit

For this recipe you will need:

- a blind-baked shell made using *pasta frolla*
- a batch of pastry cream, prepared in advance and cooled (Note: For the recipe that I used, see #5 of the Additional Information section. For this *crostata* I make half that recipe.)
- enough fresh fruit to cover the top of your *crostata* (Note: You can choose anything you like, including berries, stone fruit, , kiwis, bananas, etc. See the Additional Information section for more information on using fresh fruit.)

Directions to assemble and bake a crostata di frutta fresca:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F [180°C/ gas mark 4].
2. Roll out a batch of the *pasta frolla* and cover the base of the tart pan. (You can use Version 1 or 2: if you use Version 1, you will have more leftover *pasta frolla* to turn into cookies.)
3. Cut a piece of parchment paper or aluminum foil large enough to cover the bottom of the crust and extend out a bit over the edges of the pan.
4. You can use pie weights or dry beans to blind bake. Place whatever weight you're using directly on the parchment paper or aluminum foil in an even layer.
5. Place the *crostata* shell in the oven and bake for 20 minutes.
6. Remove the weights and parchment paper and continue baking the *crostata* shell until the border is light golden, about 5 minutes (watch carefully to avoid over-baking, which results in a hard shell). In the absence of weight, the crust may rise in the middle: if that occurs, gently push it back down with the back of a spoon.

7. Remove from the oven and let the *crostata* shell cool completely before proceeding.
8. If you use a tart pan with removable bottom, release the base from the fluted tart ring, then slide the cooled *crostata* shell on a serving plate for filling. (Note: If you've used a cake pan or pie plate, use a bit of care in taking the shell out of the baking vessel.)
9. Spread the prepared pastry cream over the cooled shell.
10. Decorate the surface with fresh fruit. The *crostata* must be cool, but not cold, so if you refrigerate it, take it out of the fridge half an hour before serving. This *crostata* is best eaten the same day it is prepared.

[Additional Information:](#)

You may be interested to know that in *Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*, [Artusi actually describes three recipes for pasta frolla](#). For *crostata*, Artusi recommends using his recipe C, made with butter and *strutto*, which is rendered pork fat used for cooking. Version 1 of the *pasta frolla* that I have given you here is a variation of Artusi's Recipe B.

[Here's another version of *crostata* with fruit preserves inspired by Artusi's recipe](#)

[This is a video from an Italian web site that shows you how to make *pasta frolla*](#). It's dubbed in English. Note that the recipe and the procedure used are a bit different from the ones I employ here; however, it's a useful link:

[A video from the same Italian food web site that shows how to make *crostata con le fragole*](#) (*crostata* with fresh strawberries) and in the process shows how to blind-bake the tart shell

Blind-baking is a process often used in baking. To blind-bake a tart shell, you line the unbaked tart (once you've placed it in the tart pan) with parchment paper or aluminum foil. You then fill the tart with pie weights. If you don't have pie weights, you can use dried beans. You pour these on top of the parchment paper or aluminum foil to weigh the paper down. You then bake the tart for a period of time to ensure that it is at least partially cooked. The weights help to ensure that the tart base does not bubble up during baking and that it bakes evenly. The blind-baked tart is then cooled and filled according to the recipe instructions. (Note that in the video, the dough is rolled to 1 cm [3/8th inch] thickness, thicker than than what I do.)

[This is the recipe that I use for pastry cream](#). You are welcome to use a different recipe. If you decide to follow mine, note that it is lightly sweetened.

[A blog post with an interesting discussion on *crostata*, the many recipes for it, and the balance of ingredients](#).

For more *crostata* ideas, check out these two recipes that you can find on my blog:

- [crostata con crema al mascarpone e mirtilli](#)
- [crostata di prugne e fromage blanc](#)

[A more elaborate recipe for fresh fruit tart that you can adapt](#) (I have not tried it).

A couple of ideas on how to use leftover *pasta frolla* dough:

- [tartarughe di pasta frolla](#)
- [frollini](#)

Notes on using a different baking pan. If you don't have a fluted round tart pan with removable bottom, as described in the Equipment section at the beginning, you are not required to purchase one. As a reference, the one I have, purchased in a store in Northern California, was not expensive. However, if you don't have such a pan, a cake pan of the same size can be used, or a pie plate. I used my 9-inch cake pan, which is 9 inches [23 cm] wide and 1.5 [a bit less than 4 cm] inches high to make a *crostata di marmellata*. Making the border required a bit more dexterity since you want it to be lower than the rim of the pan. The *crostata* was ready a few minutes earlier than when I use the tart pan. I also used a 9.5 inches [24 cm] Pyrex pie plate to make a *crostata di marmellata*.. The baking time in this case was the same as the one noted in the recipe above. The plate is 1.75 inches [4.5 cm] so the same note about the border applied. I have never seen a *crostata* not baked in a pan. If you want to explore this option, use the descriptions and photos given above to guide your hands in shaping the *crostata*.

Note on white flour. I use all-purpose flour, the most commonly available flour in the US. Do not use bread flour or flour with a high protein content. If you use pastry flour, the volume measurement will be different, so use the weight.

[Disclaimer:](#)

The Daring Kitchen and its members in no way suggest we are medical professionals and therefore are NOT responsible for any error in reporting of gluten-free ingredients. If you have issues with digesting gluten, then it is YOUR responsibility to research the ingredient before using it. If you have allergies, it is YOUR responsibility to make sure any ingredient in a recipe will not adversely affect you. If you are lactose intolerant, it is YOUR responsibility to make sure any ingredient in a recipe will not adversely affect you. If you are vegetarian or vegan, it is YOUR responsibility to make sure any ingredient in a recipe will not adversely affect you. Please consult your physician with any questions before using a product you are not familiar with. Thank you! :)