

How to make Gill Meller's salted chocolate pumpkin tart

INGREDIENTS

(SERVES 6-8)

For the pastry:

45g icing sugar
150g plain flour
20g cocoa powder
85g unsalted butter, cubed and chilled, plus extra for greasing
1 egg, whisked
1tbsp chilled water

For the filling:

100ml whole milk
250ml double cream
200g peeled pumpkin or squash flesh, cut into small dice
50g unrefined caster sugar
2 eggs
1 egg yolk
300g 70% dark chocolate, broken into small pieces
Half a tsp flaky sea-salt

METHOD

1 First, make the pastry. Combine the icing sugar, plain flour and cocoa powder in a medium bowl. Rub in the chilled butter until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs (you can do this in a food processor, if you prefer). Add half the whisked egg and all of the chilled water, and stir through to combine.

2 Tip out the dough and bring it together with your hands, kneading lightly to achieve a smooth finish. Wrap the pastry in parchment and rest it in the fridge for at least 30 minutes. Heat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/350°F/gas mark 4.

3 On a lightly floured surface, roll out the pastry until it is about 2mm thick. Grease and flour a 25cm loose-bottomed, fluted tart tin, then lay over the pastry, tucking it into the corners and leaving an overhang. Line the pastry case with baking parchment and baking beans.



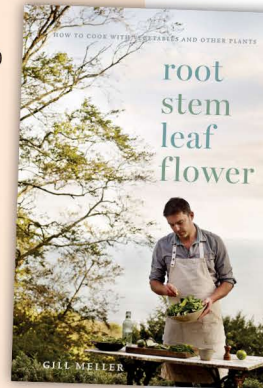
4 Blind-bake the tart case for 25 minutes, then remove the baking beans and parchment, trim the overhang, give the pastry a light brush with the remaining egg and return to the oven for 10 minutes, or until the base is just starting to colour. Remove and set aside.

5 Make the filling. Pour the milk and cream into a pan and add the pumpkin or squash. Set over a medium heat and bring to a gentle simmer. Cook, stirring regularly for 15-20 minutes, or until the pumpkin is tender. Puree the pumpkin and cream mixture together in a blender

until it is lovely and smooth and silky, then add the sugar, eggs and egg yolk and whiz for a few more seconds to combine.

6 Place the chocolate in a large heatproof bowl set over a pan of gently simmering water. Allow the chocolate to melt slowly, then remove from the heat. Pour the pumpkin puree into the melted chocolate and stir well to combine. Pour the filling into the tart case. Bake the tart for 20 minutes, then remove from the oven and allow to cool. Sprinkle the top with the sea-salt flakes before serving.

Root, Stem, Leaf, Flower: How To Cook With Vegetables And Other Plants by Gill Melle, is published by Quadrille, priced £27

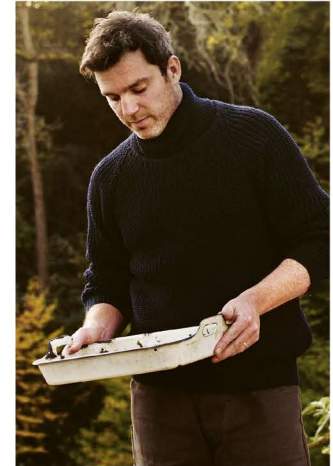


Adding veg to desserts is a trend that's been around a while now - but you may not have tried pumpkin and chocolate together.

Chef Gill Meller says pumpkin has a wonderful, buttery quality when cooked. What's more, he adds that this dessert is "a bit like American pumpkin pie - but better."

"Pureeing pumpkin turns that butter to silk," said the chef and cookery writer, best known for his work with Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall at River Cottage.

"Stir the silk through dark, melted chocolate and you get a smooth, earthy,



rich custard, to which I like to add just a little too much sea salt."

The recipe is one of many in Gill's new book - *Root, Stem, Leaf, Flower: How To Cook With Vegetables And Other Plants* - that's a real celebration of seasonal, home-grown vegetables and fruit.