



TAFFETY TART

[1658]





TO MAKE TARTS CALLED TAFFETY TARTS

✿ First wet your Past with Butter and cold Water, and rowle it very thin, also then lay them in layes, and between every lay of Apples strew some Sugar, and some Lemon Pill, cut very small, if you please put some Fennell-seed to them; then put them into a stoak hot Oven, and let them stand an hour in or more, then take them out, and take Rose-water and Butter beaten together, and wash them over with the same, and strew fine Sugar upon them; then put them into the Oven again, let them stand a little while and take them out ✿

W.M., *The Queen's Closet Opened* (1658, 4th edition)

When *The Queen's Closet Opened* was first published in 1655, England was right in the middle of its brief experiment with republicanism. On 30 January 1649, Charles I had been beheaded in front of the Banqueting House in Whitehall. In 1660, parliament would invite his son to return from exile in France to become Charles II. For the time being, however, the country was ruled by Oliver Cromwell.

Cromwell hadn't started off in charge. Four months after Charles's death, England was declared to be "a commonwealth and free state", governed by a parliament known as the Rump (so called because it was composed of a small group of survivors from an earlier purge of the Commons). However, their initiatives for shaping this new, Puritan republic were clumsy and unpopular. For Cromwell and the army that he controlled, the religious reforms they'd gone to war for weren't happening fast enough. In April 1653 he dissolved the Rump, but its successor, Barebone's Parliament (named after the MP Praise-God Barebone), was so riven by infighting that in December the moderates declared that "the sitting of this Parliament any longer as constituted will not be for the good of the Commonwealth, and that therefore it is requisite to deliver up unto the Lord General Cromwell the powers they have received from him". Four days later, Cromwell became head of the country under the title Lord Protector.

Although it was the politicians who put Cromwell in charge, his relationship with parliament remained an uneasy one. If the government pursued policies he disapproved of—as it did in 1654, legislating to contain the army and clamp down on religious pluralism, and again in 1658—he simply dissolved

parliament. (Ironically, it was Charles I's cavalier use of this tactic that had led to the Civil War in the first place.) In the wake of that first dissolution, conscious that he had very little legal authority, Cromwell resorted to using the army to keep order, dividing the country into eleven regions, each ruled by a major-general. By the end of 1655, England was under military rule.

During the year it was in operation, the military regime tried to enforce a highly moral, Puritan way of life by banning Sunday sports, horse racing and cock fighting, closing alehouses and forbidding May Day celebrations. In the film *Robin Hood Prince of Thieves*, the sheriff of Nottingham (played by Alan Rickman) angrily recites a list of punishments to be exacted on the poor, finishing with a snarled "...and call off Christmas". This is so over-the-top it always gets a laugh in the cinema, but the major-generals did indeed try to prevent the traditional celebration of the Twelve Days of Christmas.

Against such a background, it's perhaps not surprising that there was a groundswell of nostalgia for the time before the Civil War. From 1653 onwards a number of cookbooks were published, such as *A Choice Manuall* by the Countess of Kent and a revised edition of Lord Ruthven's *The Ladies' Cabinet Opened*, which presented the culinary delights of the aristocratic table—a sort of gastro-porn for palates jaded by grim Puritanism.

One of the most popular of these was *The Queen's Closet Opened*, in which the queen in question was supposedly the exiled wife of Charles I. Henrietta Maria might have been unpromising to look at (van Dyck judiciously omitted her protruding teeth from his superb portraits of the royal family) and uncompromising in outlook (during the



Civil War she was among the Royalists who favoured the utter destruction of parliament), but by 1655, in comparison with the privations of the Protectorate, she seemed decidedly more attractive. This, of course, was the book's intention. W.M. is generally thought to be Walter Montagu, a servant and close confidant of Henrietta Maria, who aimed to rehabilitate the queen by presenting her as a sort of superior domestic goddess. The book consists of three parts: *The Pearle of Practice*, which describes hundreds of herbal remedies, *A Queen's Delight*, which concerns the art of confectionery, and *The Compleat Cook*, which contains a number of sweet and savoury recipes, including Taffety Tart.

Most of the medicinal advice now seems like voodoo or witchcraft (To Hold Urine directs that the claws of a goat should be burned to a powder and added to the sufferer's food) and is generally not for the fainthearted. The best cure for a sore throat is apparently to "mixe white Dog's turd and Honey, spread it on Sheep's leather, and apply it to the Throat". Fortunately, the recipes—dressed artichokes, pigeon pie, pickled cucumber, gooseberry fool, cheesecake—are a lot less extreme.

Among these remedies and recipes, W.M. artfully inserts entries with gossipy, name-dropping titles: "A Medicine for a Dropsie approved by the Lady Hobby, who was cured herself by it"; "A Medicine for the Plague that the Lord Mayor had from the Queen"; "To make a Posset, the Earl of Arundel's Way"; "To make a Cake the way of the Royal Princess, the Lady Elizabeth, daughter to King Charles the first"; "The Countesse of Rutland's Receipt of making the rare Banbury Cake which was so much praised at her Daughter's (the right Honourable the Lady Chawerth's) Wedding".

Shamelessly aspirational, they appear to grant the reader privileged access to the lifestyle of the rich and famous.

The name Taffety Tart carries a little bit of this sense of splendour. The word taffety derives from taffeta, a type of fabric that was traditionally made from silk. Taffeta is smooth to the touch and has a seductive shimmer to it, so it became a popular choice for formal dresses and ball gowns and was generally symbolic of luxury and sumptuous flamboyance. No-one seems to know how or why the material became associated with a tart, but taffeta has a certain stiffness to it, giving dresses that rustling sound you hear in period dramas, and I wonder whether the name is in fact a reference to the crisp, brittle surface of the tart. I certainly found the name appealing, with all those alliterative t's tripping tantalising off the tongue, but what really drew me in were the ingredients. Apples, sugar, lemon, rosewater and layers of thinly rolled pastry: here was a recipe that made sense to me because I already served something similar at the Fat Duck.



I really like tarte tatin. Rich, caramelised apple and buttery puff pastry are a fantastic pairing. So, when I first opened the Fat Duck as a simple bistro serving rustic French classics, I put one on the menu. Gradually, the restaurant moved away from the bistro concept, but the tart kept pace with the changes; I was able to adapt and refashion it so that it continued to fit with the other dishes on the menu. By 2007, however, it needed a rethink, and the inspiration I found took the dish in a whole new direction.

The Fat Duck menu at that time featured a galette of rhubarb, in which the fruit was gently

poached and allowed to set, then placed on an olive-oil biscuit base and topped with yoghurt mousse, over which was laid a strip of *arlette* (an extremely thin, caramelised puff pastry). Now it occurred to me that an arlette could easily take the place of the more conventional puff pastry in a tarte tatin, giving a lovely crisp, delicate contrast of texture and a nice reinforcement of the caramelised flavour.

It still surprises me how changing a single ingredient can trigger a wholesale re-evaluation of a dish. The crispy arlette put me in mind of a millefeuille, which has several layers of pastry with cream in between them, and I saw that I could use that overall structure to create a new tarte tatin in which each ingredient was cooked separately, by whatever method and at whatever temperature suited it best, and then assembled layer by layer.

Over time I developed the contents of those layers: apples poached slowly in sugar syrup until intensely caramelised, then layered in slices and baked gently until firm enough to be cut into a wedge; the poaching syrup warmed and set with pectin to create a *pâte de fruit* (a sort of refined fruit pastille), and piped blobs of fromage blanc cream, all sandwiched by rectangles of crisp pastry and garnished with, among other things, dried apple pieces. A set of textures and flavours that, as I discovered when looking through *The Queen's Closet*, were also characteristic of Taffety Tart.

It's always exciting when a recipe from the past seems to chime with something you're working on. If nothing else, it's a reminder of how relevant and illuminating culinary history can be. Here, though, it also presented me with an opportunity to take my apple dish in a new direction. In W.M.'s recipe, the tart was given flavour complexity by sprinkling fennel seeds

and finely chopped lemon peel amid the layers, and adding rosewater to the buttercream. I decided to take this trio of flavourings and explore how I might use them in my dish.

Lemon was relatively easy to introduce. Candying the julienned zest created concentrated, sweet, firm strips that could be scattered on top of the tart, offering sudden bursts of citrus flavour and a welcome texture contrast. I wanted, though, to capture some of lemon's other characteristics as well—its freshness and sharpness—so I elected to have segments of it in the dish as part of a salad-style garnish that was taking shape in my mind.

Rosewater was trickier to incorporate. The delicate fragrance can be delightful, but if it's used with a heavy hand the scent is overpowering and can seem old-fashioned, summoning memories of the sort of perfume your gran might have worn. The best approach, I decided, was to let it mingle with the fromage blanc, and trial and error got me to an amount that made its presence felt without taking over. But I also had a bit of science up the sleeve of my chef's whites that I reckoned would help with the rosewater scent. There's a phenomenon that scientists call super-additivity, which has given rise to a valuable technique that I use in my restaurants. It's a process by which the brain combines a number of cues from the senses to produce a more intense or effective sensory experience. An example of this is how, in a noisy environment, we rely on lip-reading as well as listening in order to understand what someone is saying. It's the combination of sight and sound that creates full comprehension. At my restaurants I've explored super-additivity in a variety of ways, garnishing a lavender brûlée with lavender sprigs, for example, to enhance the flavour. Similarly, in the Fat Duck dish

“Sound of the Sea”, diners eat while listening to a recording of the sounds of a seascape through earphones, which intensifies the maritime flavours of the dish. I reasoned, therefore, that if I crystallised rose petals and added them to the garnish, the sight of the petals would both prepare the diner for the rosewater flavour and subtly reinforce it.

Candying—coating ingredients in a sugar syrup—is a technique that has been practised since at least the Middle Ages, originally as a method of preservation, and it offered a good way of bringing fennel seeds into the dish. I first participated in the traditional method of making comfits when I visited food historian Ivan Day's house while I was researching the history of trifle. Comfits are seeds, nuts and spices, such as cardamom, caraway, aniseed, fennel seed, diced ginger or cinnamon strips, that have been coated in sugar. In the Tudor period they were served at the end of a meal with a glass of spiced wine to aid digestion, or as a garnish for sweet dishes like trifle. Comfits were still popular in the nineteenth century: in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice pulls out a box of them that she distributes as prizes in the Caucus Race. Since then, they've become less familiar, but the basic idea continues in the dessert decoration hundreds and thousands, which derive directly from comfits.

Making comfits the traditional way is a laboursome business. At Ivan's I crouched over a copper pan on the fire, continually massaging sugar syrup on to fennel seeds, then letting them dry, until they had acquired fifty coats of the stuff. A natural food colouring, such as spinach, saffron or mulberry juice, was added to the final few coatings to give the comfits a brilliant hue. The end result was worth the effort, however, providing not just a lovely

crunchy texture, but also a little detonation of intense, fresh flavour. It was a great example of flavour encapsulation (see page 203), and I could see it would be invaluable for all kinds of dishes, so long as I could find a less cumbersome method for making them. At one point, my head of creative development, Jocky Petrie, was spinning seeds and syrup in a coffee can bolted on to a hand-drill while he trained a hairdryer on them, but eventually—as you'll see in the recipe—we came up with a simple technique that captured the flavour and texture I wanted.

Fennel seeds are strong, so they have to be managed carefully to prevent them dominating a dish. For Taffety Tart I again chose infusion as one way of introducing the flavour very gently, adding bagged seeds to the poaching caramel once it had come off the heat to let the aromas spread into the liquid. I also put crystallised fennel seeds in the crumble mixture that would top the tart and give it plenty of texture. But rather than leaving them whole, which means you get a real shot of fennel as the seed cracks open, I crushed them roughly to subdue the flavour-release effect a little. By now it was clear that fennel had become the main background flavour, present throughout the dish in a kind of supporting role, so I looked into bringing other forms of it into the recipe, settling on a final garnish of freshly sliced strips of fennel bulb and its delicate fronds. The resulting flavour combination is, I think, particularly unusual, even unexpected—a real flavour of the past.

TAFFETY TART



Makes 6 portions

Vanilla Ice Cream

- 1.2kg Whole milk
- 5 Vanilla pods, seeds only
- 5 Coffee beans
- 195g Light brown sugar
- 120g Egg yolk
- 75g Skimmed milk powder
- 300g Whipping cream
- 110g Vanilla-flavoured yoghurt

Place the whole milk, vanilla seeds and coffee beans in a saucepan and bring to 90°C/194°F. Remove from the heat and allow to cool to 52°C/126°F.

In the meantime, place the sugar in a separate bowl and add the egg yolk. Whisk well and gradually pour into the 52°C/126°F milk mixture, whisking continuously. Add the skimmed milk powder and whipping cream and return to the heat, continuing to whisk. Bring the mixture to exactly 70°C/158°F and hold it at this temperature for 10 minutes, stirring frequently.

Pour the ice cream base into a large sous-vide bag that has been placed carefully in iced water. Allow the ice cream base to chill to 5°C/41°F. Seal the sous-vide bag and store in the fridge overnight to allow infusion.

Using a fine-mesh sieve, strain the ice cream base into a container and add the yoghurt. Combine the mixture with a handheld blender until fully emulsified.

Churn the ice cream and store in the freezer until needed.

Caramel

- 22g Pectin NH
- 1.1kg Golden caster sugar
- 30g Fennel seeds
- 500g Unsalted butter, cubed and at room temperature
- 1kg Apple juice
- 100g Verjus du Périgord

Combine the pectin NH with 100g of the sugar in a small bowl and set aside.

Wrap the fennel seeds in a muslin cloth and secure with string.

Place a large, deep pan over a medium heat and add a thin layer of sugar. As the sugar starts to melt and colour, swirl the pan gently and add another layer of sugar. Do not aggravate the melting sugar by stirring it, as it may seize and form crystals. Do so until all the sugar has melted and turned a dark golden copper colour.

Add the butter a little at a time, whisking it in well to emulsify after each addition. Remove from the heat and gradually add the apple juice, stirring regularly until the mixture is well combined.

Place the pan back on the heat and bring to the boil. Add the pectin mixture, the fennel parcel and the verjus. Remove from the heat and allow to cool.

Once cool, remove and discard the muslin parcel of fennel seeds.

Poached Apples

- 6 Braeburn apples
- Reserved caramel

Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F.

Peel and core the apples and place them in a deep roasting tray. Pour enough caramel over the apples to cover them completely. You should use at least 750g, as you will need it again later. Cover the tray with baking parchment, allowing the paper to touch the surface of the caramel. Place a double layer of foil over the tray and carefully pierce 3 small holes in the foil.

Bake in the oven for 25 minutes, then remove the tray and turn the apples. Repeat this process every 15 minutes until the apples are caramel brown all

the way through. Make sure the foil stays in place.

Remove the apples from the caramel and refrigerate, covered.

Pass the poaching caramel through a fine-mesh sieve and allow to cool. Store the poaching caramel in the fridge until needed.

Tatin

- 6 Reserved poached apples
- 200g Reserved poaching caramel

Preheat the oven to 120°C/250°F. Line a tray with baking parchment.

Slice the apples into 4mm slices and place the slices, overlapping tightly, on the tray.

Remove the layer of fat from the chilled poaching caramel and discard it. Pour enough caramel into the tray to cover the apples and place in the oven.

After an hour, rotate the tray and return to the oven for 1 more hour. Continue to do this until most of the liquid has evaporated. Remove the tray from the oven and place it in the fridge.

Once the tatin has chilled, turn it out on to a work surface.

Make a template by cutting out a 10.5 x 11.5 x 5.2cm triangle from a suitable material. Plastic and silicone work well. Using the template, cut out 6 triangular shapes from the tatin and store in a sealed container in the fridge until needed, with layers of baking parchment separating the pieces.

Apple Caramel Gel

- 15g Golden caster sugar
- 2.6g Pectin jaune
- 250g Reserved poaching caramel, fat removed
- 3.6g Malic acid

Mix the sugar and pectin in a small bowl, combining it well using a small whisk. Set aside.

Place the poaching caramel and 85g water in a saucepan and bring to the boil. Add the sugar and pectin mixture and reduce the heat to medium. Whisk the caramel continuously until it reaches 66° Brix.

Mix the malic acid with 1.3g water and add to the caramel. Line a tray with baking parchment and pour the caramel on to the tray. Allow to cool and set completely.

Using the template as a guide, cut the set gel into triangular shapes. Store in the fridge until needed, with baking parchment separating the pieces.

Arlettes

- 150g Puff pastry
- 75g Icing sugar

Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F.

Roll the puff pastry as thinly as possible between 2 sheets of baking parchment, dusting frequently with icing sugar to prevent it from sticking.

Roll the pastry until it is paper thin and place on a baking tray. It is not necessary to remove the parchment. Place a heavy tray on top and bake in the oven for 15 minutes.

Rotate the trays and bake for 10 more minutes. Carefully remove from the oven once the arlette is golden.

Lift the top tray off the arlette and peel off the baking parchment. Using the template as a guide, cut 12 arlettes and allow to cool. Store in an airtight container with silica gel.

Rose Cream

- 175g Fromage blanc
- 35g Icing sugar
- 50g Whipping cream
- 1.8g Rosewater

Place the fromage blanc in muslin and suspend it over a bowl. Allow it to hang for 48 hours in the fridge.

Place 125g of the hung fromage blanc in a bowl and add the remaining ingredients. Whisk until well combined and firm. Transfer to a piping bag and store in the fridge until needed.

Apple Fluid Gel

- 190g Spray-dried apple
- 3g Malic acid
- 7 Bay leaves
- 7.5g Gellan F (low-acyl gellan)

Place 560g water, the spray-dried apple and malic acid in a saucepan and bring to the boil. Remove from the heat and add the bay leaves. Cover the saucepan with clingfilm and allow to infuse for 30 minutes.

Strain the liquid through a fine-mesh sieve and pour into a Thermomix. Bring the liquid to 90°C/194°F at medium speed.

Add the gellan F and blitz at high speed for 1 minute. Lift the lid and scrape down the sides of the jug. Continue to blitz for 1 more minute to incorporate fully. Pour the mixture into a large bowl and place the bowl in iced water. Allow to cool completely.

Place the gel in a clean Thermomix. Blitz for 1 minute, then lift the lid and scrape down the sides of the jug. Blitz for 1 more minute to incorporate fully.

To remove the air bubbles from the gel, scrape it into a shallow container and place in a chamber vacuum sealer. Under full pressure, close the lid and keep a close eye on the gel, stopping the process as soon as the bubbles rise to the top. Repeat several more times until the gel no longer bubbles. Transfer to a piping bag and store in the fridge until needed.

Vanilla Biscuits

- 250g Unsalted butter
- 165g Golden caster sugar
- 75g Egg yolk
- 290g Plain flour
- 4g Salt
- 1g Vanilla powder
- 2.5g Baking powder

Place the butter and sugar in a mixer bowl and cream until light and creamy using the paddle attachment. Reduce the speed and add the egg yolk until combined.

In a separate bowl, combine the flour, salt, vanilla powder and baking powder, then gradually add the dry ingredients to the mixer. Taking care not to overwork it, mix until the dough starts to come together.

Remove the dough from the mixer bowl and wrap in clingfilm. Allow to rest in the fridge for 2–3 hours.

Preheat the oven to 170°C/340°F. Remove the dough from the fridge and place between 2 sheets of baking parchment. Using a rolling pin, roll to a thickness of 3mm and place in the freezer for 10 minutes.

Gently place the dough on a baking tray and peel off the top layer of baking parchment. Bake for 15 minutes, then remove. Using the template as a guide, cut the biscuit into triangular shapes. Return the biscuits and trimmings to the oven and bake until golden.

Allow to cool and set the biscuits aside in a sealed container. Reserve the biscuit trimmings and blitz them to crumbs. Set them aside in a sealed container.

Crumble Elements

- 250g Almonds
- 60g Unsalted butter, cubed and at room temperature
- 1.5g Vanilla powder
- 15g Sea salt flakes
- 35g Fennel seeds
- 25g Golden caster sugar

Preheat the oven to 160°C/320°F.

To make the almond praline, spread the almonds out evenly on a roasting tray and place in the oven for 10 minutes. Toss the almonds and return to the oven for 5 more minutes. Repeat this process until they have roasted to a dark golden colour. Remove from the oven and allow to cool.

(continued overleaf)

Place the almonds in the Thermomix and blitz to form a liquid paste. You may need to stop at intervals and scrape down the sides of the jug. Store in the fridge until needed.

To make the brown butter, place the butter cubes in a small saucepan and melt gently, whisking continuously. After several minutes, the butter will give off a nutty aroma and the solids will turn brown. Once the butter reaches 190°C/375°F, remove from the heat and pass through a fine-mesh filter bag. Refrigerate until needed.

To make the vanilla salt, combine the vanilla powder and sea salt flakes well. Store in a sealed container until needed.

To make the crystallised fennel seeds, toast them in a frying pan over a moderate to high heat until golden, stirring regularly. Remove the seeds from the pan and return the pan to the heat. Add the sugar and allow it to melt and caramelize. Add the toasted fennel seeds and stir to coat them in the caramel. Pour the coated seeds on to a silicone mat and quickly cover with a second mat. Roll it flat with a rolling pin and allow it to cool.

Store in a sealed container until needed.

Crumble Topping

- 200g Reserved almond praline
- 40g Reserved brown butter
- 60g Reserved crystallised fennel seeds
- 8g Reserved vanilla salt
- 300g Feuilletine
- 50g Spray-dried apple

Preheat a water bath to 50°C/122°F.

Place the almond praline in a sous-vide bag and seal. Place the brown butter in a second sous-vide bag and seal. Drop both bags in the water bath for 15 minutes.

In the meantime, put the crystallised fennel seeds in a bag and lightly crush using a rolling pin. Set aside.

Once the praline and butter have been removed from the water bath, put them in a round-bottomed bowl and add the vanilla salt. Stir well to

combine. Add the feuilletine and crushed fennel seeds and stir.

Weigh out 140g of this crumble and add the spray-dried apple. Store in a sealed container until needed.

Crystallised Rose Petals

- 110g Pasteurised egg white
- 55g Gum arabic
- 9 Drops rosewater
- Rose petals from 3 edible roses
- 150g White caster sugar

Place the egg white, gum arabic powder and rosewater in a deep-sided container and blitz using a handheld blender until fully combined.

Place 1 rose petal in the palm of your hand and, using your finger, gently coat the petal on both sides with the egg white mixture. Gently cover the petal with sugar and shake off any excess. Place on a tray that has been lined with baking parchment. Repeat until all the petals have been coated. Allow the petals to dry out overnight.

Candied Lemon Zest

- 20g Lemon zest peelings
- 50g White caster sugar
- 25g Glucose

Finely slice the lemon zest peelings into thin strips, julienne style. Ensure there is no visible pith.

Blanch the zest in boiling water for 1 minute. Pass the water through a sieve, reserving the zest and discarding the water. Repeat this process with fresh boiling water. Set the zest aside.

Place 600g water, the sugar and glucose in a saucepan and bring to a simmer, stirring until the sugar has dissolved.

Reduce the heat and add the blanched zest. Simmer until it is soft and almost transparent. Remove from the heat and allow the zest to cool in the syrup. Store in the fridge until needed.

To Serve

- 6 Reserved vanilla biscuits
- 6 Pieces reserved apple caramel gel
- 6 Pieces reserved tatin
- 12 Reserved arlettes
- Reserved rose cream
- Reserved apple fluid gel
- Reserved crumble topping
- Shaved fennel pieces
- Lemon segments, cut into small pieces
- Fennel fronds
- Reserved candied lemon zest
- Reserved crystallised rose petals, broken into pieces
- Reserved biscuit crumbs
- Reserved vanilla ice cream

Gently build up the tarts, using a vanilla biscuit as the base. Working from the bottom up, and ensuring the elements are lined up perfectly, place the apple caramel gel on top of the biscuit; the tatin on top of the apple caramel gel; the arlette on top of the tatin. Pipe several balls of the rose cream on top of the arlette.

Gently spread the apple fluid gel on a second arlette and scatter over the crumble topping. Place this gently on top of the rose cream to complete the tart. Transfer it to a plate, off centre.

To garnish, pipe a thin line of apple fluid gel along the open side of the plate and arrange the remaining elements on the gel strip. Twirl the shaved fennel into a spiral and place 2 on either end of the fluid gel strip. Place small lemon segments, fennel fronds and candied lemon zest pieces on the strip next to the fennel spiral. Top each end with a piece of crystallised rose petal.

Place a small pile of biscuit crumbs in the centre of the fluid gel strip and place a rocher of the vanilla ice cream on top of the biscuit pile. Serve immediately.

