
SEASONAL RECIPES

BY CURTIS DECARION, CHEF-OWNER AT CAFÉ ESIN

Citrus is important to our cooking at Café Esin, perhaps because it is embedded in our backgrounds. Esin and I grew up in different countries—she is from Turkey and I am from Miami—but both of us had fruit trees at our homes as children. I had kumquats, oranges, avocados, mangoes and bananas trees. Esin had Seville oranges, lemons and tangerines, along with many other fruits and vegetables. As a young child I would pick the kumquats, eat some of the puckery fruit and then throw some at friends. I didn't realize their value until later in life. Esin's mother would make jams with the Seville oranges and her family would utilize the lemons and other citrus in many Mediterranean dishes.

If we had to choose one citrus as a favorite at Café Esin it would be the lemon. It is quite versatile and will brighten the flavor of many dishes. This time of year we have the wonderful Meyer lemon, which has a hint of orange flavor and is not as sour as a conventional lemon. Esin incorporates the Meyer lemon into her meringue tart with gingersnap crust.



ESIN'S LEMON MERINGUE TART WITH GINGERSNAP CRUST

Crust

6-7 gingersnap cookies
2 tablespoons melted butter

Crush cookies in a food processor until fine. Stir in melted butter. Press mixture into bottom and sides of 9-inch tart pan. Bake at 325 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes. Set aside.

Filling

4 eggs
2 egg yolks
½ cup Meyer lemon juice
¾ cup granulated sugar
5 ounces cold unsalted butter, cut into ½ inch cubes
Zest of Meyer lemons

Whisk together eggs and egg yolks in a stainless steel bowl. Add lemon juice and sugar, stirring until smooth. Place the bowl over a pan of simmering water and cook, whisking constantly until it thickens. Remove from heat and immediately submerge the bowl in an ice water bath just enough to cool the outside of the bowl—about 10 seconds. Remove from the ice bath. Add butter piece by piece. Add lemon zest and stir lightly to combine. Pour the lemon filling into prepared tart pan. Bake about 10 minutes until filling has set. Take it out of the oven and let it cool.

Meringue

½ cup egg whites (about 4), warm
1 cup sugar
½ teaspoon cream of tartar

Place egg whites in mixing bowl. Place the bowl in a warm water bath to heat the bowl. With the whisk attachment, beat egg whites and cream of tartar on medium speed until soft peaks begin to form. Raise speed to high and gradually add the sugar. Beat the mixture until stiff and glossy peaks form. Spread the meringue over the tart, covering to the edges. Create peaks the meringue while spreading it by pulling up with the spatula. Form enough points to cover entire tart. Use a kitchen blow torch to brown the meringue all over.