

Tomato Tart

with Spices and Herby Feta



This tart is inspired by one of my favorite ways to use a ripe tomato: sliced on top of a toasted everything bagel with cream cheese. With that flavor combination in mind, I developed this tomato tart: a mix of fresh and roasted tomato slices with lots of olive oil and sizzled spices, layered over an herby feta and mayo schmear on a flat, free-form pastry base. Using both cooked and raw tomatoes gives the tart the best of both flavor worlds: juicy and fresh as well as deep and concentrated. I wait all year for tomato season, picking any and all wan, orangish-pink slices off salads and sandwiches until I can really savor a juicy, deep red tomato. In the Northeast, this means holding out until August, at which point I make sure to incorporate tomatoes into every meal until they disappear in October.

Serves 8

Special Equipment: Food processor (optional)

2½ pounds (1.13kg) **heirloom** or **beefsteak tomatoes**
1 medium **shallot**, cut into thin wedges
5 **garlic** cloves, unpeeled
2 large sprigs **fresh thyme**, plus 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
¼ cup **extra-virgin olive oil** (2 oz / 57g), plus more for drizzling
½ teaspoon **coriander seeds**, crushed with the flat side of a knife
¼ teaspoon **crushed red pepper flakes**
¼ teaspoon **cumin seeds**
¼ teaspoon **fennel seeds**
Kosher salt and freshly ground **black pepper**
Flaky All-Butter Pie Dough ([this page](#)) ①
All-purpose flour, for rolling out
8 ounces (227g) **feta cheese** ②
¼ cup **mayonnaise** (2.2 oz / 60g)
2 tablespoons finely chopped **fresh oregano leaves**, plus more leaves for topping

Preheat the oven: Arrange an oven rack in the center position and preheat the oven to 400°F.

Bake the tomatoes: Core half of the tomatoes and use a serrated knife to cut them into ¼-inch-thick slices. Scatter the sliced tomatoes, the shallot wedges, garlic, and thyme sprigs across a rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with ¼ cup of olive oil and sprinkle with the coriander seeds, red pepper flakes, cumin seeds, and fennel seeds. Season everything with salt and pepper. Roast until the tomatoes are sizzling, darkened around the edges, and very fragrant, 35 to 40 minutes, rotating the pan halfway through. Remove the pan from the oven (leave the oven on). Carefully loosen the tomatoes with a metal spatula in case they've stuck. Remove the thyme sprigs and crumble the crispy thyme leaves over the tomatoes (discard the stems). Transfer the tomatoes, garlic, shallots, and any oil or spices left on the baking sheet to a plate and set aside to cool. Clean the baking sheet, line it with parchment paper, and set it aside to bake the crust.

Roll out and bake the crust: Let the pie dough sit at room temperature for about 5 minutes to soften slightly. Place the dough on a lightly floured surface and use a rolling pin to beat the dough all across the surface to make it more pliable. Roll out the dough, dusting with more flour as needed to prevent sticking, until you have an oblong slab that's a little more than ⅛ inch thick. (Don't worry about the shape—irregular is fine, good even!) Transfer the pastry to the parchment-lined baking sheet and prick all over with the tines of a fork. If the pastry has softened and is a little sticky, chill it briefly until it's firm, about 10 minutes. Bake the pastry until it's deep golden brown all over, 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool.

Make the herby feta: In a food processor, combine the feta, mayonnaise, chopped oregano, and 1 teaspoon thyme leaves. Squeeze the reserved roasted garlic cloves out of their skins and into the food processor. Season lightly with salt and pep-

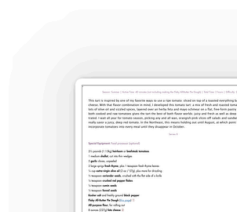
per and process until the mixture is light and smooth. (Alternatively, you can simply mash all the ingredients together in a medium bowl with a fork until well combined; it just won't be super smooth.)

Assemble the tart: Slice the remaining tomatoes and season with salt and pepper. Scrape the feta mixture directly onto the cooled pastry and spread it with a small offset spatula or the back of a spoon all across the surface to the edges, leaving a thin border. Layer the fresh and cooked tomato slices over the feta. Top with fresh oregano leaves, drizzle with more olive oil, and serve.

DO AHEAD

The tart will keep, loosely covered, for 1 day at room temperature and up to 3 days in the refrigerator (the crust will soften over time and the fresh tomato slices might turn mealy when chilled). The baked crust and roasted tomato mixture, both covered and stored separately at room temperature, can be made 1 day ahead. The feta mixture, covered and refrigerated, can also be made 1 day ahead. Assemble just before serving.

- ① You can also use a sheet of thawed, store-bought frozen puff pastry in place of the homemade pie dough. Just make sure to let it thaw in the refrigerator overnight, roll it out with a bit of flour to flatten any creases, and prick it very well with a fork before baking. If it puffs up during baking, flatten it with the back of a spoon. I recommend Dufour brand, but any brand labeled “all-butter” will work.
- ② Always look for the feta cheese that comes as a block packed in brine rather than the pre-crumbled stuff. It will whip up much lighter and smoother. There are lots of varieties, but I prefer the extra-tangy sheep's milk feta.



Flaky All-Butter Pie Dough



Season: All | Active Time: 25 minutes for the dough, plus another 30 minutes for a par- or fully baked crust | Total Time: 3 hours for the dough (includes 2 hours 30 minutes for chilling), plus another 1 hour 20 minutes to 1 hour 30 minutes for a par- or fully baked crust | Difficulty: 2 (Easy)

For a recipe with so few ingredients, pie dough is one of those essential pastry preparations that no two people make the same way. I prefer to make a relatively dry dough, using as little water as possible to bind the flour, because I find that a drier dough from the outset bakes into a flakier, more tender crust that holds its shape and browns faster (which is especially useful for wetter fillings). If your dough feels a tad crumbly and still has a few floury spots, that's okay. It will continue to hydrate as it rests in the refrigerator, plus the rolling and folding technique—something I learned from baker extraordinaire and overall incredible human Tara Jensen—will further help to bring it together. This recipe makes a generous amount of dough for one standard 9-inch pie plate, which means you have a little extra to work with in case you're not a master with the rolling pin.

Makes enough for one 9-inch pie or tart crust ①

Special Equipment: Pie weights or 4 cups dried beans or rice (for parbaking)

1 stick plus 2 tablespoons **unsalted butter** (5 oz / 142g), chilled

1½ cups **all-purpose flour** (7 oz / 200g), plus more for rolling out

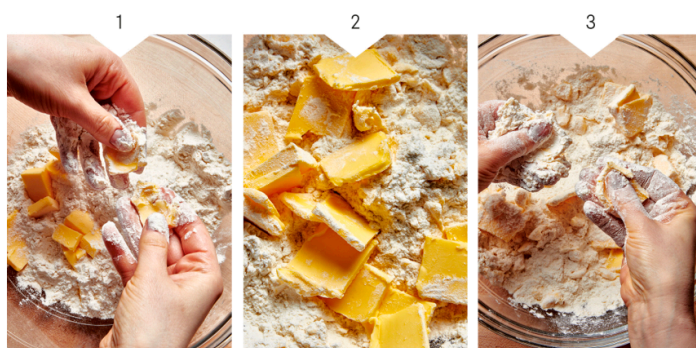
1 tablespoon **sugar** (0.46 oz / 13g)

¾ teaspoon **Diamond Crystal kosher salt**

Prepare the ice water and slice some of the butter: Fill a 1-cup liquid measure with ice water and refrigerate it while you assemble the pie dough. Cut a 5-tablespoon block of the butter (2.5 oz / 71g) crosswise into ⅛-inch-thick slices (so you have lots of thin butter squares) and refrigerate.

Mix the dry ingredients: In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, and salt to combine.

Work the butter into the dry ingredients: Cut the remaining 5 tablespoons butter (2.5 oz / 71g) into ½-inch cubes and toss in the flour mixture to coat. [1] Quickly and firmly use your fingertips to smash the butter pieces into the flour, flattening them and working into smaller bits until the largest pieces are no bigger than a pea. ② [2,3] Remove the butter slices from the refrigerator, add them to the flour mixture, toss to coat, then flatten between your thumbs and fingertips into thin sheets, letting them break apart if that's what they want to do. Once you've worked in all the butter, you should have a very coarse, slightly yellowed mixture filled with some larger pieces of butter and some very small bits.



Bring the dough together: [4] Slowly drizzle 5 tablespoons of the ice water (avoiding any ice) into the mixture, tossing constantly with a fork to incorporate. [5] Switch to your hands and toss the mixture several times until shaggy pieces of dough form, then knead the mixture inside the bowl a few times to bring it together (the dough will look very clumpy and dry, with loose bits). Line the work surface with a sheet of plastic wrap, then transfer any large clumps of dough to the plastic. [6] Tossing again with a fork, drizzle more ice water 1 teaspoon at a time into the bowl with the remaining flour mixture until only a few dry spots remain, then knead with your

hands to bring it together into a dough. Transfer the last bits of dough to the plastic wrap.

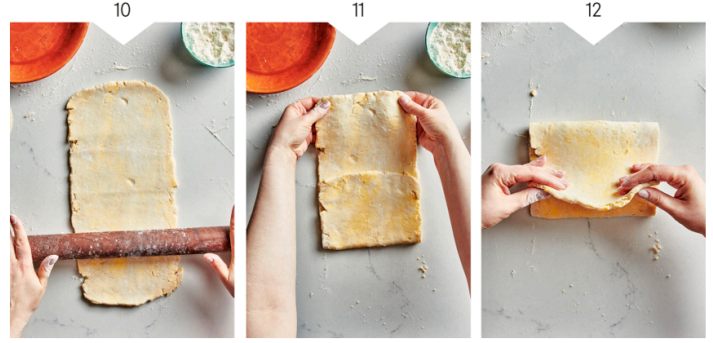


Wrap and chill the dough: [7] Pat the dough into a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-thick square or rectangle. [8,9] Wrap tightly in the plastic, pressing out any air, and press down on the dough with the heel of your hand to flatten it further and force it into the corners of the plastic. Refrigerate for 2 hours. The pie dough is technically ready to use at this point, but proceed through the next step, which will make it extra flaky.



Roll out and fold the dough: Let the dough sit on the counter for 5 minutes to soften slightly. Unwrap it and place on a lightly floured surface. Use a rolling pin to beat the dough all across the surface to make it more pliable. [10] Dust the top and underside of the dough with more flour, then roll it out, dusting with more flour as needed, into a rectangle that's about three times longer than it is wide and between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick. [11,12] Fold the dough in thirds like a letter (this makes more butter layers, which create a flaky texture), then wrap tightly in plastic. Refrigerate the dough until it's relaxed, at least 30 minutes and up to 3 days. It's now ready to use. If the recipe calls for a lined pie plate, a

parbaked crust, or a fully baked crust, follow the directions below.



If baking, preheat the oven and prepare a baking sheet:

Arrange an oven rack in the center position and preheat the oven to 425°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil and set aside.

Line a 9-inch pie plate: Let the pie dough sit at room temperature for about 5 minutes to soften slightly, then beat it across the surface again with a rolling pin to make it more pliable. [13] Dust the top and underside of the dough with more flour, then roll it out, dusting with more flour as needed, into a 13-inch round that's about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick. Roll the pastry onto the rolling pin.



[14,15] Unroll the round onto a 9-inch pie plate, preferably glass, letting the pastry slump gently down the sides into the bottom. Firmly press the pastry into the bottom and up the sides of the



plate, ensuring contact everywhere and taking care not to stretch it. ④



[16] Use scissors to trim around the edge of the pastry, leaving a ½-inch overhang (discard the scraps).



[17] Tuck the overhang underneath itself all the way around so you have a lip of double-thick pastry resting just around the rim of the pie plate.



[18] Press down firmly around the rim to seal, then crimp the crust all the way around, using the thumb of one hand and the thumb and forefinger of the other, flouring your fingers if needed to prevent sticking. Instead of a crimp,

you can also use the tines of a fork to create hash marks around the rim.



Bake the weighted crust: Freeze the lined pie plate until the dough is very firm, about 10 minutes, then prick the bottom of the pastry in several places with a fork to prevent the crust from puffing up. Line the inside of the pie plate with two pieces of foil, arranged perpendicularly, so the overhang of the foil completely covers the edge of the crust. Fill the pie plate with pie weights, dried beans, or rice and place on the prepared baking sheet. Bake in the center of the oven until the edge of the crust is set and starting to turn golden when you peek under the foil, 25 to 30 minutes. Remove the plate from the oven and carefully lift the foil and pie weights out of the crust. Reduce the oven temperature to 350°F. ⑤

To par- or fully bake the crust: Return the pan to the oven and bake until the crust is golden brown all over, another 20 to 25 minutes for a parbaked crust, or until deep golden brown all over, 10 to 15 minutes longer, for a fully baked crust. ⑥ Set the crust aside to cool.

VARIATIONS

- **Almond Pie Dough:** Replace ⅓ cup of the all-purpose flour (1.6 oz / 45g), with ⅓ cup almond flour (1.4 oz / 40g). Note that the dough will require less ice water to come together because the almond flour is much less absorbent than all-purpose.
- **Whole-Grain Pie Dough:** Replace ⅓ cup of the all-purpose flour (1.6 oz / 45g) with ⅓ cup of any whole-grain flour (1.6 oz / 45g) such as wheat, spelt, rye, or buckwheat, and follow the recipe instructions. Note that whole-grain flour absorbs more water than all-purpose flour, so you will need slightly more ice water.



the dough together. Expect this version to be ever so slightly denser and crumblier than the original.

- **Double Crust:** For a double-crust pie, double all the ingredients. Cut half the butter (10 tablespoons / 5 oz / 142g) crosswise into 1/8-inch-thick slices and then cut the rest into 1/2-inch cubes. Start by adding 1/2 cup ice water (4 oz / 113g) to the bowl and proceed with the method as written to bring the dough together. Wrap the entire amount of dough in plastic, forming it into a square, and refrigerate. Cut the square of dough in half to create two single crusts and proceed with the rolling and folding method for each one.

DO AHEAD

The dough, wrapped tightly in plastic and refrigerated, will keep up to 3 days or can be frozen up to 2 months (place in a resealable plastic bag before freezing). Let the frozen dough thaw overnight in the refrigerator before using. The par- or fully baked crust, covered and stored at room temperature, will keep for 1 day.

- ① Double this recipe and make two pieces of pie dough at a time, even if you only need one (see the instructions for the **Double Crust** variation on [this page](#)). It's always a good idea to keep an extra frozen crust for an emergency or a rainy day.
- ② Work quickly while you're smashing the butter into the flour so it stays cold; if it starts to soften, place the whole bowl in the freezer to chill for several minutes.
- ③ If you try to roll out the dough straight from the refrigerator, it will likely crack. However, if tempered dough cracks while rolling, it might be underhydrated. Dribble 2 teaspoons of cold water across the surface, or spritz it a couple of times with water using a spray bottle, then fold the dough in half, wrap it in plastic, and refrigerate for 30 minutes. This should make it easier to roll out.
- ④ Press the dough firmly and thoroughly into the pie plate or pan with your palms and fingertips, and firmly anchor the edges to the lip of the pie plate. This will help prevent shrinkage in the oven and encourage better browning.
- ⑤ Don't forget to reduce the oven temperature from 425°F to 350°F when baking the crust again after removing the pie weights. Baking a second time at a lower temperature helps prevent cracking and shrinkage, which could cause problems later on (especially if the pie has a liquidy filling).

- ⑥ If you're preparing the crust for a custard pie, such as the **Caramelized Honey Pumpkin Pie** ([this page](#)), make sure that the crust is fully baked through and at the very least a deep golden brown across the bottom before you add the filling. Liquidy custards generate steam while they bake, which mostly prevents the crust beneath from taking on any additional color. The edge of the crust may have developed a few dark spots by the time the pie is done, but it's worth it to prevent a soggy bottom.

