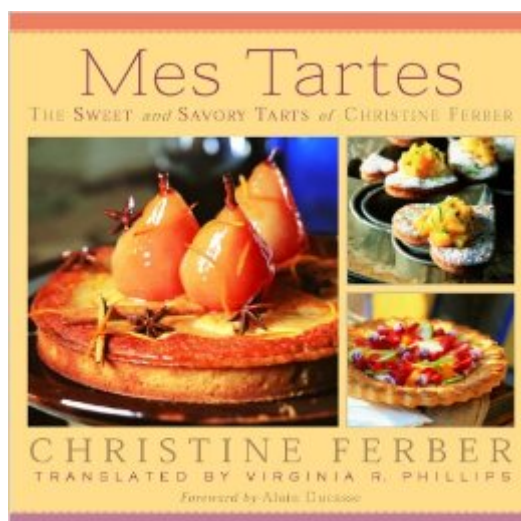


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Mes Tartes: The Sweet And Savory Tarts Of Christine Ferber



Synopsis

"In this book I explain the alchemy of the pastry, discuss the preparation of *bonne cr me   flan*, *cr me anglaise*, *cr me aux  ufs*, and above all, I offer to lovers of fine food, ways to create new aromas and flavors." #151;Christine Ferber      After the publication of the original French edition of *Mes Confitures* in 1998, Christine Ferber was chosen as France  's finest patisserie. Now, in *Mes Tartes*, she brings together a new collection of her unique recipes.     Christine Ferber unravels a seasonal thread of ingredients to create an encyclopedia of truly wonderful tastes, invaluable advice, slights of hand, culinary tricks, and inventive and successful methods for insuring magnificent tart fillings and perfect crusts. In all, the book contains more than 130 previously unpublished recipes for sweet and savory tarts.

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Customer Reviews

`Mes Tartes' by Christine Ferber, subtitled `The Sweet and Savory Tarts of Christine Ferber' is a highly polished gem of a book and a rare find if you are fond of classic MittelEuropean pastries. While the book was originally written in French and finely translated into English by Virginia R. Phillips, the book's contents show a broad influence of France, Germany, Italy, and Austria, the powerhouses of western pastry traditions. This is only appropriate, as Ms. Ferber is headquartered in Alsace, near the borders with southern Germany and Switzerland. To my knowledge, this is the second of Mme. Ferber's works available to us in English. The first, fittingly, was on preserves and confits, the classic ingredient in sweet tarts. While this earlier book is a leader in its class, its audience is a bit limited. The audience for fine pastries, at least the audience of those willing to

make fine pastries is a lot larger than the readers willing to make preserves. Aside from the quality of this book, the most important thing to know about it is that it covers a range of pastries much broader than what you commonly describe as tarts. While it covers both sweet and savory flat pies with pastry crust and cooked fillings, it also covers galettes, quiches, Tatin, and clafoutis (custard or flan based cherry filled pastry), although almost all recipes produce something which has a fairly strong family resemblance to a tart or pie. I have read many fine books on pastry making lately and this book will certainly never replace some of these better texts such as Rose Levy Beranbaum's 'The Pie and Pastry Bible' or Nick Malgieri's 'Perfect Pastry' or Flo Braker's 'The Simple Art of Perfect Baking' or Gayle Ortiz' 'The Village Baker's Wife', but this book is by far the finest presentation of the very French techniques of making pie and tart pastry by working the butter into the flour with a cold work surface and the heel of your hand which 'smears' the cold butter into the butter. There is no way this method is easier than either a pastry cutter or even better, a food processor, but the results are so distinctive, I feel anyone with a love of pastry techniques will want to see Mme. Ferber's use of this technique. While Ferber does not go into the depth of explanation as, for example, Ms. Beranbaum, about why certain flours are better than others for pastry making, Mme. Ferber is very careful in describing the needs of the flour in each case and typically specifies one of two French style flours and approximates how you can reproduce these products with mixtures of American wheats. The general introduction on techniques and equipment is not as big as you may find in some books, but it is more important than most in that Mme. Ferber recommends a very typically French selection of dark iron pans which may not be readily available in the United States. Knowing this is important because one may wish to pay just a little more attention to baking times if your equipment did not fly in on a plane from Strasbourg. The only piece of equipment that gave me reason to rush to the Sonoma-Williams web page was the tart pan with the detachable bottom and NO FLUTES. Most of the finished products in the book's photographs show tarts done in fluted pans, but more than a few are done in fluteless pans. Like her book on confits, this book is arranged by season. Two years ago, this organization did not appeal to me as much as it does today since I do much more cooking and baking today than I did two years ago, and I find myself going more and more to cookbooks organized by season, now that I have a pretty good collection of them. In fact, I believe this organization doubles the value of this book as the variation in quality and price of fruits is much more than with vegetables. A cabbage is a cabbage the year around, but a peach is only a prime Georgia peach for two months of the year. Another really delightful find in this book is some of the more unusual recipes, such as the sauerkraut and Munster tart. You can almost pinpoint on the map the site of this recipe's birth, as Alsace is 'sauerkraut' central, just north of

Munster, Germany. You can almost imagine that in pizza was invented in the Rhineland, this is what it would look like. And, adding a little corned beef and Russian Dressing to the recipe may bring you achingly close to a great Reuben flavored appetizer. All measurements are given in units familiar to American cooks. When the 'professional' unit is metric weight and the U.S. amateur cook would use a volumetric measurement, the primary unit is given in cups. Aside from the great variety of recipe types, the classic fruit tarts are done to a level of perfection you may not see outside of a very fancy patisserie. Fruit fillings have carefully prepared flavored glazes that I simply do not see in my average Martha Stewart recipe. This is no reflection on Martha Stewart Living's recipe writers. It is an indication that these are extremely serious recipes with no compromises to easy baking. For a book originally written in French, the list of American suppliers and resources is very good. In fact, this is the first and only reference I have yet to see to a web site for doing measuring unit conversions. As I think this alone may be worth the price of the book, I suggest you buy the book and check out page 285. If you bake or collect books on baking or are especially fond of French cooking techniques, this book should be high on your list of future purchases. Very highly recommended indeed. My deepest thanks to the Michigan State University Press for making Mme. Ferber's books available to us.

For someone who has enjoyed Christine Ferber's jams, the news of publication of her two books (*Mes Confitures* and *Mes Tartes*) in English were very welcome. The mere flipping through the pages reveals the beautiful pairings of flavours, colours and textures as well as Mme. Ferber's genius in highlighting (rather than masking) the flavour of fruit. However, I was less impressed with the editing of the English edition of *Mes Tartes*. The first red flag was a mistake in the staple recipe for flaky pastry, which called for 3 tablespoons of butter (per 1lb of flour). Thankfully, the metric measures retained from the original edition provided the correct ratio (375g of butter per 1lb of flour). In other words, I highly recommend the book, but I would urge caution in relying solely on the cups/tablespoon measures provided. Use the metric measures provided for guidance.

I love Christine Ferber's jams and have her other book of confiture recipes in French - she is a master of seasonal flavor combinations, but as others have noted this book is not so well translated and is aimed at experienced pastry cooks. Examples:- 3.5 tablespoons of milk is *not* equal to 50 grams of milk when making pastry cream- when making the almond cream (*frangipane*), you should add the egg yolks one at a time or risk the mix separating. Experienced cooks will know to do these things and can guess at which quantities are correct, but a beginner could not just follow the recipe

word for word and expect success. I made the strawberry mint tart - it was okay but the pastry cream was too congealed for my taste (the word 'glop' comes to mind; I suspect this is down to the use of too much cornstarch and the 10 minute cooking time) and I was not impressed with the rich nut pastry shell. The combinations of fruit, vegetable and herb flavors are beautiful as are the photos, so I will use this book as a resource, but I'm afraid I will turn to Rose Levy Bernbaum or Michel Roux for more reliable basic pastry shell and cream filling recipes.

This is a super book to read and to work from. The translation is a little difficult for beginners to follow, partly because it is badly edited - the recipes don't always flow logically, and measures are inconsistent. However, if you know what you're doing, there is endless inspiration here, yet the techniques and patterns of ingredients are deeply grounded in the traditional cuisines of careful French cooking.

The recipes are clear, concise and mouth-watering. The fresh ingredients are easily available and American substitutions suggested when French varieties aren't available. The photos are beautiful making this well-loved and used cookbook just as lovely for a coffee table as the kitchen shelf. If you like fresh, savory, sweet and simple...this is for you!

If you love Ms Ferber's cuisine, you will love her books. The problem, as others have noted, however, is the lack of equivalents for ingredients commonly available in France but rarer elsewhere. Still, if you are adventurous and brave, you will not only try her recipes, you will love them!

I baked, and baked and want to bake some more. These recipes are inspiring, and easy to follow. Tarts come out and everyone is just wows them!

I am LOVING this book. Every tart so far has been incredible and the directions are so clear.

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