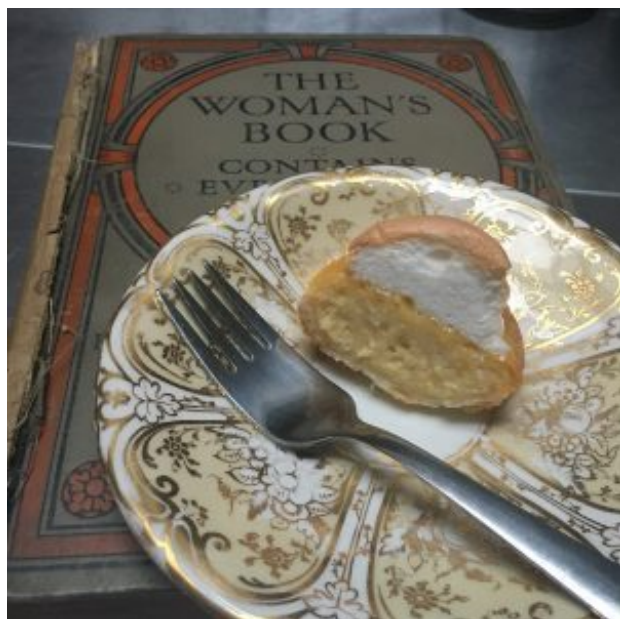


How do you make Fanchonettes (and what are they?)

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Paul Couchman

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Imagine a pastry case filled with almond and lemon custard, topped with meringue. That's what these delicious tarts are. They were made famous by the first celebrity chef Antonin Carême, who, cooked for the royalty of Europe in the early nineteenth century. He even cooked an incredible feast for Brighton and Hove's own Prince Regent at the Brighton Pavilion. Carême didn't stay long in the Prince Regent's kitchen. It was said he found him vulgar and left Brighton to seek out better employers!

The name of these tarts could come from a small lace fichu worn as a head covering by women in the traditional costumes of some areas of France. Or it could be a cute form of the name Françoise. It may well be both!

These tarts were a real surprise for me. They are similar to lemon meringue pie, of course. I've tried a simple almond flavoured one but there are also fanchonettes flavoured with pistachio, coffee, vanilla and apricot jam. The lucky volunteers and staff at the Town House will soon be very tired of eating fanchonettes as my plan is to create all of those flavours next week.

For the pastry:

- 115g plain flour
- 60g unsalted butter, cold, cut into small pieces
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 large egg

For the filling:

- 25g butter

- 50g plain flour
- 80g sugar
- 50g ground almonds
- zest of 1 lemon
- 2 egg yolks
- 1 egg
- pinch of salt
- 250ml milk

For the meringue topping:

- 2 egg whites
- 115g caster sugar
- pinch of salt

Preheat the oven to 220c, 200 degrees fan, gas 7.

Make the pastry by adding the butter pieces to the flour, baking powder, sugar and salt in a bowl. Lightly with your finger tips rub the butter into the flour mix until it starts to resemble bread crumbs. Add the egg with a fork and start to bring the mixture into a ball, finish this with your fingers, gently rolling the mixture against the side of the bowl. Wrap the pastry in cling film and leave to chill in the fridge for 20 minutes.

Take the pastry from the fridge. Sprinkle your worktop with flour and roll out the pastry until thin. Using a pastry cutter, cut out discs that will fit your tart tin. I used a 12 hole tin but feel free to make larger tarts if you will. Fill each tart with a small piece of baking paper and beans, rice or ceramic beans. Put into your pre-warmed oven and bake them for 9 minutes. Take them out the oven, remove the paper and beans, and put back for another 5 minutes. Take them out the oven. Leave to rest.

For the custard add butter, flour, sugar, ground almonds, lemon zest, egg yolks, egg and milk into a small pan. Put the pan onto the heat and very gently, on a low heat, whisk until the mixture thickens. This does take a while, keep watching and whisking. The mixture will need to become quite thick. Don't stop too soon.

This custard can be poured into the pastry cases and then they are returned to the oven. They will set in about 15-20 minutes.

Now you can make the meringue. Put the egg whites, sugar, salt and lemon juice into a bowl and whisk slowly to start. Gradually increase the speed of the whisking. The meringue needs to be light and fluffy. You should be able to make stiff peaks in it. Spoon the meringue into a piping bag with a small hole.

Remove the tarts from the oven when they are ready. Pipe meringue over the custard, if you are in the mood pretty 'pearls' look amazing, otherwise simply cover the custard, right to the edges.

The tarts can now be returned to the oven for about 10 minutes, I like to leave the tops ever so slightly brown but this is really up to you.

The tarts can be eaten hot or cold but I prefer them cold.

There are many variations listed by Carême in his book French cookery: comprising L'art de la cuisine française, Le pâtissier royal, Le cuisinier parisien / by Antonin Carême, 1836. Translated by W. Hall

I am busy planning a course in Regency Fancies for later this year (2018) and it seems almost certain that I will include Fanchonettes. They will also appear on the menu for the Regency Dancing Event which will take place on April 28th, 2018. [A booking link is here.](#) If you would like to join me on a course please drop me an email or comment below.



The Regency characters who will guide you through Regency Dancing steps on the 28th April at the Regency Town House.