



Chicken and asparagus tartelette

DENMARK

Any person who has ever visited a Danish family for dinner during the last two decades will have been served this dish. In the eighties and nineties, these tartelettes were part of any festive lunch, served usually between the fish and meat courses on the Danish version of a smörgåsbord.

The word "tartelette" is self-explanatory: little crispy pastry cases, served warm with filling. If you cannot get hold of the ready-made "tarteletter", you can substitute with vol-au-vents although these are not as fine in texture. If you want to make them yourself, use a very light short crust pastry dough.

Makes a great starter to any meal. If you serve this to a Dane, it will make them reminisce of Mormor (grandma), their home town and rolling hills / little mermaids.

Serves 4 (two pastries each)

8 'Tarteletter' pastry cases

1 small free range chicken (around 1 kg)

For the stock: 2 shallot onions, 2 carrots, 1 leek, 2 bayleaf, 3 cloves, salt, pepper

2 jars of white asparagus (190g, Green Giant from Waitrose – can be replaced by green asparagus in same quantity or, if in season, freshly blanched British asparagus). Cut into 2 cm pieces.

150g petit pois peas (frozen)

50g butter

50g plain flour

4 dl chicken stock

Salt, pepper

1. Prepare the chicken. In a large sauce pan, cover the chicken with water and all the stock ingredients. Bring to the boil and skim off any foam as it cooks. Keep on simmer for about 40 minutes or until done.
2. Remove chicken from water and leave to cool a bit before removing all the meat (cut into rough bite sized chunks) and place in a separate bowl. Put all bones and skin back in the pot and continue to boil for about 10 minutes. Take off heat and put stock through a sieve – discard bones and veg, set stock aside.
3. Drain the asparagus – save the water (about 200 ml). Melt the butter in a saucepan at medium heat and add the flour to form a roux – keep whisking as it thickens. Add the asparagus water bit by bit and keep it on the boil. Add chicken stock – keep going until you have a good consistency sauce that is not runny. Season. Add a dash of cream if you want your mixture a bit more creamy.
4. Add the asparagus and peas and chicken pieces. Simmer for a few minutes and fold carefully (the asparagus will breakup easily). Take off the heat.
5. Heat the tarteletter cases in a hot oven for a few minutes, place on individual plates and fill each case with the chicken and asparagus mixture. Decorate with a sprig of chervil or water cress. Serve immediately.

Notes:

The whole dish can be prepared up until and including step 4 the day before. Keep the mixture chilled and re-heat in a sauce pan, gently, until heated through, and then complete step 5.

Fillings can be changed to reflect seasons: chicken and mushroom is a good variant, as is prawns and crayfish.

Freeze left over chicken stock for future use.