



Ham, Gruyere & Asparagus Quiche

1 recipe pie dough, (see recipe below) enough for one bottom crust
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 medium shallots, thinly sliced
10 ounces asparagus spears, cut on the diagonal into 1-inch long pieces
1/2 pound ham, cut into 1/4-inch cubes
Freshly ground pepper
1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup heavy cream

3 large eggs
6 ounces Gruyère cheese, grated (1 1/2 cups)

On a lightly floured surface, roll out dough into a 12-inch circle. Fit into a 10-by-1 1/2-inch round tart pan (with or without a removable bottom), pressing dough into corners. Transfer to freezer to chill for 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350°. Line pastry with parchment paper, wax paper, or aluminum foil, pressing into the corners and edges. Fill at least two-thirds with baking weights - dried beans, rice, or aluminum pie weights. Bake first for 15 minutes, remove from oven and let cool a few minutes. Carefully remove parchment paper and weights. Poke the bottom of the pie pan with the tongs of a fork and return to oven and bake an additional 10 minutes or until lightly golden. (Fork holes are for any air to escape.) Transfer to a wire rack to cool while making filling.

Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium high heat. Add shallots, and cook, stirring, until translucent but not brown, about 1 minute. Add asparagus. Cook, stirring frequently, until asparagus are just cooked (al dente), slightly browned, firm, not mushy, 8 to 10 minutes.

Increase oven temperature to 375°F. Place tart pan on a baking sheet to catch any run-off there might be (especially if you are using a pan with a removable bottom.) Sprinkle half the cheese evenly over the bottom of the crust. Spread asparagus and ham over the cheese and then top with remaining cheese. In a medium bowl, whisk together milk, cream, and eggs. Season with fresh ground pepper. Pour over cheese. Transfer to oven, and bake until just set in the center, 30 to 35 minutes. Cool on a wire rack for about 10 minutes before slicing.

Pie Crust

1 1/4 cup all-purpose flour, plus extra for rolling

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon sugar (increase to 1 1/2 teaspoons if for a sweet recipe)

8 Tbsp (1 stick) chilled unsalted butter, cut into 1/2 inch cubes

3 to 4 Tbsp ice water, very cold

Place the flour, salt, and sugar into a food processor and pulse until well combined. Add half of the butter cubes and pulse 6 to 8 times. Then add the other half of the butter cubes and pulse 6 to 8 more times. You should have a mixture that resembles a coarse meal, with many butter pieces the size of peas.

Add a couple of tablespoons of ice cold water (without the ice!) to the food processor bowl and pulse a couple of times. Then add more ice water, slowly, about a tablespoon at a time, pulsing after each addition, until the mixture just barely begins to clump together. If you pinch some of the crumbly dough and it holds together, it's ready, if not, add a little more water and pulse again. Try to keep the water to a minimum. Too much water will make your crust tough.

Remove the crumbly mixture from the food processor and place on a very clean, smooth surface.

Use your hands to press the crumbly dough together and shape into a disc. Work the dough only enough to just bring the dough together. Do not over-knead or your crust will end up tough.

You should be able to see little bits of butter, speckling the dough. When these bits of butter melt as the crust cooks, the butter will help separate the dough into flaky layers. So, visible pieces of butter are a good thing, what you are aiming for, in the dough.

Sprinkle the disc with a little flour on all sides. Wrap the disc in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 1 hour. (At this point you can freeze the dough disk for several months until ready to use. Defrost overnight in the refrigerator before proceeding.)

When you are ready to roll out the dough, remove the disk from the refrigerator and place on a clean, smooth, lightly floured surface. Let it sit for 5 to 10 minutes to take just enough of a chill off of it so that it becomes easier to roll out.

Sprinkle some flour on top of the disk. Using a rolling pin, roll out the dough to a 12 inch circle, to a thickness of about 1/8 of an inch thick.

As you roll out the dough, check if the dough is sticking to the surface below. Add a few sprinkles of flour if necessary to keep the dough from sticking.

Place on to a 9-inch pie plate, lining up the fold with the center of the pan. Gently unfold and press down to line the pie dish with the dough.

