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Thoughtful Food

'Papa's Favorite Torte' travels from Christmas to Easter, and it's still delicious

By Susie Iventosch

(Adapted from "Private Collection 2: Recipes from the Junior League of Palo Alto" by Sora O'Doherty)



Photo Susie Iventosch

When Sora O'Doherty is not busy doing investigative reporting and photography, or writing about local events for the Lamorinda Weekly, she can often be found in the kitchen creating some lovely and delectable concoction for her family, friends and coworkers. When she told me about the almond-raspberry torte she'd made for a Lamorinda Weekly editorial meeting, and then proceeded to send pictures, I realized this is the perfect dessert for Easter!

The torte is actually called "Papa's Favorite Torte" and O'Doherty's rendition is an adaption of the recipe found in "Private Collection 2: Recipes from the Junior League of Palo Alto," published in 1984. The anecdote introducing this recipe is really cute, too. "It became increasingly difficult to find an appropriate gift for Papa, so one holiday I treated him to this wonderful almond torte. It's been his special Christmas present ever since." That line was not attributed to anyone in the cookbook, but this dessert has become a favorite of O'Doherty's family, too.

"I've never made this for anyone who didn't love it," O'Doherty remarked. "It also transports easily and keeps beautifully!"

O'Doherty added one extra egg (an extra yolk in the crust and an extra white in the filling), as well as the jam spread over the crust. The original did not call for jam, and O'Doherty says she prefers something a little tart, like

raspberry or lingonberry jam, or even cranberry sauce.

To me, the raspberry jam is a natural with the torte and I used the Bonne Maman Raspberry Preserves, which is one of my favorite raspberry jams on the market. I was able to find lingonberry jam, too, and will absolutely try that one next time I make this dish. I made this torte two days ahead of my party and wrapped it loosely in foil. It really did hold up very well – even the crust remained nice and crisp. Then, I refrigerated the leftovers and found that the dessert is even better when chilled!

The recipe says to cook the torte for a full hour, but I found that mine was completely cooked in 45 minutes, so perhaps I have a hotter oven, but just keep an eye on it the first time you make it so you don't overbake it.

Also, the recipe calls for 8 ounces of almond paste, and if you use Odense brand, that tube is 7 ounces. O'Doherty uses the full 8 ounces, so she has quite a bit leftover from the second tube to use for other dishes. I love to make almond scones and our recipe calls for almond paste, (recipe in an upcoming column), so that is a great use of the extra. On top of that, I simply made mine with 7 ounces instead of 8 and it seemed to turn out just fine.

If you love almonds, you will most definitely love this torte. Many thanks to someone's "Papa" and to O'Doherty for sharing this delicious treat.

INGREDIENTS

- Crust**
1 ½ cup all-purpose flour
5 Tbsp. granulated sugar
½ cup butter, softened to room temperature
2 egg yolks (save whites for filling)
- Filling**
8 oz. almond paste
2 Tbsp. granulated sugar
2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
2 eggs
2 egg whites
½ tsp. almond extract
½ to ¾ cup raspberry or lingonberry jam, or cranberry sauce
- Topping**
½ cup sliced almonds, toasted
½ cup powdered sugar
2 Tbsp. milk

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 325 degrees.
In the bowl of a food processor mix flour, sugar, and butter. Mix until crumbly. Add egg yolks through the tube with the motor running. If you don't have a mixer, then you can cut the butter into the flour-sugar mixture with your fingertips and stir in the egg yolks with a fork. Mixture will be crumbly and will not form a ball or hold together.
Turn dough into a fluted 10-inch tart pan with a removable bottom. Pat the dough into the tart pan, filling in all the nooks and crannies of the fluted edges. Use the back of a spoon to smooth it out. I sprayed my tart pan with a little bit of cooking spray before patting the dough into place.
Very carefully spread a good layer of jam or cranberry sauce over the crust, being careful not to disrupt any crust crumbles.
For filling, place almond paste, sugar, flour and 2 eggs and blend until very smooth. Add egg whites and almond extract and blend again until smooth. Pour over jam in prepared crust.
Bake for 1 hour. Top will be a nice golden-brown. (Mine only took 45 minutes to cook until center was no longer jiggy and the top was a nice golden-brown.)
Cool 10 minutes. While the torte is cooling, place the almonds in a pie tin and toast at 325 degrees for 10 minutes, or until slightly browned. Remove from oven. Combine powdered sugar and milk and spread over the top of the torte. Sprinkle toasted almonds over the top and arrange evenly, covering the entire top.
Cool completely before serving. This torte keeps beautifully for several days at room temperature. I also refrigerated it and it was delicious cold.



Cooking Term of the Week
Coulis

Coulis is a fruit or vegetable purée, used as a base for a sauce or as a garnish, but can also be a simple sauce by itself. The sauce may be thick or thin but is easily pourable. The fruits or vegetables have usually been cooked, puréed and strained to create a sauce-like consistency. Tomato coulis is often used in savory dishes, while fruits made into a coulis are normally served over desserts like crepes, ice cream, and cheesecake, or over breakfast dishes such as waffles or pancakes.



Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.

Those pesky General Education requirements: How to make them work for you

By Elizabeth LaScala, PhD

Graduating seniors deciding which college to attend or juniors considering which colleges to apply to should look carefully at a college's general education requirements. These are courses that everyone, regardless of their major, must take in order to complete their degree. They will usually represent one-quarter to one-third of the total credits required.

Some of the GE requirements will be courses you want to take, but others may not capture your interest. At most schools, the GE classes will consist of a semester or two of English composition, aka Expository Writing or Writing Seminar, and courses in the humanities, fine arts and performing arts, a social science, history course, foreign language, mathematics and science. Sound familiar? Yep, it's a lot like high school but college level. Sometimes there will be a community service requirement or a life fitness course requirement, often pass-fail. If you are looking at Jesuit or other

religiously affiliated colleges you will likely see requirements in subjects such as philosophy and religion, although they may have titles like "Meditative Arts" and "Faith in Modern Society."

Colleges have GE requirements because their leadership and faculty want to see their students engage in a broader-based liberal arts education, whether the students see value in it or not. However, the more required GE courses a student must take in additional to required classes for their major, the fewer the electives available. Designing your class schedule also becomes more challenging, especially in the early grade levels. If you have a choice between a school that has few GE requirements and one that asks you to take 12 credits in subjects of little interest to you or courses where you have considerable difficulty with in high school, the choice could affect the time it takes to earn the degree as well as college GPA.

Different schools address GE requirements differently. Some, such as Amherst, Brown, Hampshire and Smith have few or no GE requirements. You might have only one or two required courses, and then enjoy free rein to choose whatever classes you want, as long as you complete the prerequisites. The upside: you have the freedom to choose, as long as you have some idea what you might like to study. The downside: you are navigating your college education without the structure GE requirements can provide, and some students are more successful at this than others.

Here are three questions to ask yourself so you make better choices:

Can you place out of the introductory courses?

Some colleges will grant course credit based on a "4" or "5" on an Advanced Placement test. Others will ask students to sit for their own examination. Some schools may give credit for the intro course, but

ask students to take an advanced course in the same subject instead.

How much variety is there to choose from in each subject area?

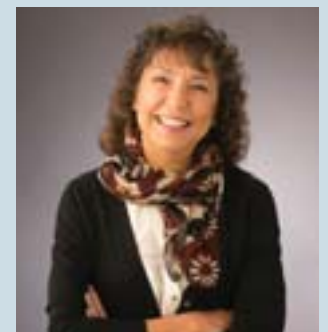
Do you need to take calculus to fulfill the math requirement? If you are glad to leave math behind in high school some schools offer courses that are less quantitative, for example: the environmental and scientific issues behind an oil spill.

Can you apply a course used to fulfill a General Education Requirement towards a major or minor?

Some schools let you "double dip" courses towards fulfilling requirements as well as completing a major or minor. That required calculus course could be used to fill the calculus requirement for pre-med.

Students should ask these often pesky GE requirements questions and learn how to work them to their advantage. And as in all phases of the college admission process, realistic self-appraisal combined with

good research are factors important to success.



Elizabeth LaScala, PhD, brings decades of admissions expertise to personally guide each student through applying to well-matched colleges, making each step more manageable and less stressful. She has placed hundreds of students in the most prestigious colleges and universities in the U.S. Reach her at (925) 385-0562 (office) or (925) 330-8801 (mobile), or online at www.doingcollege.com or Elizabeth@doingcollege.com.