

Whether for a main or side, this savory tart stands out



Photo Susie Iventosch

Caramelized red onion, blue cheese, walnut tart

By Susie Iventosch

The exceptional flavor combination of blue cheese, caramelized red onions and toasted walnuts is worthy of a few hours spent in the kitchen making this delicious tart. It really could stand on its own for a meal, but it makes a fantastic appetizer for a dinner party, or a great side for soup night!

Making your own crust is not that difficult and I suggest doing it, because it is the perfect backdrop to the filling. I find that I like to make sure

my crust is cooked all the way through before I add the filling, that way even the bottom and sides of the tart are nice and crispy.

Even though the name of this tart doesn't include pecans, I did use half pecans and half walnuts. They both add a certain flavor that works well together and complements the blue cheese-onion filling.

I just froze some for when the family is here over Thanksgiving, and I will report back how that worked out.

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. Or visit <https://treksandbites.com>



INGREDIENTS - Crust

1 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
3/4 stick unsalted butter (6 tablespoons or 3 oz.) chilled and cut into small pieces
1 teaspoon cider vinegar
2-3 tablespoons ice water

DIRECTIONS - Crust

Spray a 9.5-inch tart pan with a removable bottom with cooking spray. Set aside for the moment. Preheat oven to 350 F.

Place flour and salt in a mixing bowl. Stir with a whisk. Add cut up butter and with finger tips or a pastry cutter, cut butter into flour mixture until butter is the size of very small peas. Sprinkle cider vinegar over and stir in with a fork. Now, stir in ice water, a little at a time and blend with a fork until mixture can be formed into a ball.

Flour the surface of a pastry cloth or cutting board, and roll dough in a circle, about 11-12 inches in diameter.

Transfer the dough onto prepared tart pan, and pat down into the bottom of the pan and up along the sides. Trim off any excess dough.

Using a fork, poke holes over the bottom and on the sides of the dough in the tart pan. (If you have pie weights or dry beans, cut a piece of parchment paper the same size as the bottom of the tart pan, and place it over the bottom of the crust, then sprinkle weights over the parchment paper. This keeps the crust from bubbling up and getting unshapely. If you don't have all this stuff, then just bake it with the holes in it and you will probably be good to go. That is what I did for this tart and it worked just fine.)

Bake tart crust for 15-18 minutes. Remove from oven and cool.

INGREDIENTS - Tart Filling

1/3 cup walnut pieces
1/3 cup pecan pieces
1 large red onion, very thinly sliced
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/4 cup dry sherry
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme, or 1 teaspoon fresh minced thyme
1/2 teaspoon white pepper
5 oz. crumbled blue cheese
2 eggs
2/3 cup heavy cream

DIRECTIONS - Tart Filling

Toast nuts in a dry pan over medium-low heat, or in 350 F oven until just beginning to brown and to release their rich, nutty aromas. This takes about 5 minutes using either method. Remove from pan and set aside to cool. (*Be sure to keep your eye on them ... they tend to burn easily the second you lose focus!)

In the same skillet, heat olive oil and add red onions. Cook over low heat until caramelized, about 20-25 minutes, stirring occasionally. Depending on the burner, this could take more or less time, but I really like to caramelize the onions for a longer time on lower heat. They turn out perfectly this way. When onions are caramelized, add sherry and turn heat up to medium. Cook just long enough to deglaze the pan and allow most of the liquid to evaporate. This should only take about 2-3 minutes on medium heat. Remove from stove and cool.

Mix eggs and half & half in a small bowl.

To assemble tart, place prepared tart pan on a baking sheet to prevent spills in the oven. Spread onions evenly over the bottom crust. Distribute nuts evenly over that. Sprinkle blue cheese crumbles over nuts. Finally, pour egg mixture over everything.

Bake at 350 F for 30-35 minutes, or until center is set, slightly puffy and golden brown.

Allow to sit for 10 minutes before serving. Also delicious served cold.

Exploring the Mendocino Coast



Fort Bragg seaside cliffs

Photo Dan Miller

By Fran Miller

Bucolic, tranquil, and scenic. These Mendocino County attributes lure travelers seeking to truly get away from it all, and two special Inns along the coast more than deliver. Fort Bragg's The Inn at Newport Ranch is located a roughly 3.5-hour drive from the East Bay; it is part of a 2,000-acre coastal cattle ranch featuring more than a mile of ocean front cliffs, three miles of ridge tops with panoramic

coastal views, and 20 miles of world class hiking and biking trails threading through the redwoods. While children are welcome, it's worth noting that waivers are signed upon arrival due to the Inn's positioning along steep Pacific Coast cliffs.

Founder Will Jackson sought to replicate the spirit of 19th century westward expansion when he bought this land nearly 35 years ago. His desire to share the beauty and adventure of the topography culminated in his building of the sumptuous and inti-

mate boutique Inn. Stunning artisanal design that reflects the area's shipping and logging heritage includes headboards and furniture crafted from enormous felled redwoods, a 20-foot-wide walk-in stone fireplace, and a building supported from base to cathedral-like ceiling by 24 individual redwood trees. Guest rooms, suites, and a complete ranch house (several with full kitchens and some with private hot tubs), are all uniquely decorated in various Craftsman-esque themes and furnished to provide the ultimate in comfort.

Hike, bike, and horseback ride on the Inn's many trails, or better yet, explore the entire property via a guided UTV (utility terrain vehicle) tour. Throughout the two-hour adventure, the Inn's pro driver/guide will whisk you through cattle-grazed pastures, to coastline, to shaded redwood forests. Few other California locations provide this topographical diversity, and it's breathtaking. Make sure though to set out on foot to discover the property's multiple driftwood benches, each perched perfectly to capture dramatic views of the seaside cliffs and caves.

A 6 to 7 p.m. nightly happy hour features appetizers as well as a choice of local wines, beers and delicious crafted cocktails made with premium spirits, and offers the opportunity to either commune with other guests or enjoy the solitude of a coastal facing view from the large covered porch. A three-course dinner, if desired at \$75/person, follows; currently, guests are socially distance-seated either within the large dining room with floor to ceiling sliding glass doors open to the fresh air, or outside at tables of two with heat lamps warding-off the coastal chill. A bountiful made-to-order breakfast is included with each stay and includes a choice of sweet or savory items.

Heading south on Highway 1 in the tiny town of Elk is the boutique Harbor House Inn & Restaurant, best known for its Michelin-starred cuisine. Beyond its shingled, Craftsman-style façade, guests find one of the most glorious views along the Mendocino Coast. Reopened in 2018 after an eight-year restoration project, the luxury getaway features 11 guest rooms, each adorned with original artwork: six in the main historical building, four cot-



Inn at Newport Ranch Photo courtesy The Inn at Newport Ranch

tage suites on the bluff, and the new Madrone Guest Cottage featuring a king bedroom, two full bathrooms, dining room, living room, and private kitchen.

Chef Matt Kammerer, a 2020 James Beard Award semi-finalist and 2019 Food & Wine Best New Chef, forages and harvests the ingredients for Harbor House's restaurant – the first and only Michelin-starred restaurant in Mendocino County. His exquisite, up-to-12 course tasting menus are each a hyperlocal, coastal experience focused on seafood and vegetables. Ingredients are sourced from across Mendocino County, including live fish picked up from local fisherman at the dock. He and his team even make their own crème fraiche, butter, vinegars, and naturally leavened breads. The property features its own chickens, and 15 raised vegetable beds, planted and cultivated by the kitchen crew.

In addition to the lovely accommodations and the gourmet cuisine, Harbor House offers a slow-paced haven, the focus of which is its stunning coastal view. Grab a good read and lounge in a hammock, or claim an Adirondack chair, perfectly poised toward the sparkling Pacific. It's quiet here, the peace interrupted only by the sound of the wind, the crashing waves, bird calls, and maybe a clucking chicken from the on-site coop. A visit is not complete without a hike down to the Inn's secluded black sand beach, sprinkled with shimmering abalone shells. The 272-stair climb back to the Inn gets the heart pumping, and makes every bite of your multi-course dinner that much more enjoyable.

Scarecrows return to Orinda off-ramp



Photo Sora O'Doherty

Orinda Garden Club's annual scarecrow brightens up the off-ramp from Highway 24. Three scarecrows, appropriately wearing

masks and gloves, welcome visitors and residents to Orinda. -- S. O'Doherty