

A cheese flan is a cheap, tasty and versatile dish that can be eaten hot or cold with a salad in the summer months and the beauty of it is you can use up spare veg in the fridge when making it although if adding vegetables with a high water content such as tomatoes or spinach, you may need to increase the cooking time to ensure the filling sets.

CHEESE FLAN

Serves 2-4

Vegetable portions: 1-2 per person

INGREDIENTS

Pastry

Either used a roll of shop bought shortcrust pastry or

- 175g plain four plus extra for dusting
- 75g butter plus extra for greasing
- Salt

Filling

- 2 Onions
- Butter
- Grated nutmeg
- Grated mixed cheeses eg Cheddar, Franche Comte and Smoked Cheddar
- Mushrooms and chopped bell peppers optional dressing
- 3 - 4 eggs
- 2 garlic cloves
- 250 mg of double cream or plain yoghurt. An alternative is Crème Fraiche.
- 150 mls milk (if more milk needed add another egg – 50 mls milk = 1 egg)
- Salt and pepper
- Plain flour – for dusting

METHOD

1. If making the pastry sift it into a large bowl and add a pinch of salt. Rub in the butter until you have a soft breadcrumb texture. Add enough cold water to make the crumb mixture come together to form a firm dough and rest it in the fridge for 15 minutes.
2. If using shop bought pastry, roll it out on a lightly floured surface until large enough to line a 25cm loose-bottomed tart tin, with a little overhang of pastry all the way round the top. This will allow for the pastry shrinking in the oven later. If there is more overhang than you need, trim off the excess with scissors. Gently press the pastry into the sides of the tin and prick the base with a fork then chill in a fridge for 15 mins.
3. Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6.
4. Melt the butter in a large non-stick frying pan, thinly slice the onions and peppers and add them to the pan, frying them until the onions are soft and golden brown.
5. Add the mushrooms to the pan 5 minutes before the onions have finished cooking.
6. Line the pastry case with a sheet of baking parchment and fill with ceramic baking beans. Bake for 15 mins on the hot baking sheet (this helps to prevent a soggy bottom). Carefully remove the parchment and beans, then return to the oven for 10 mins more until the pastry has the colour of light shortbread.
7. Meanwhile beat the cream, milk and eggs with seasoning and nutmeg, then stir in half the cheese.
8. Remove the pastry case from the oven and reduce heat to 190C/170C fan/gas 5. Spoon the caramelised onions, mushrooms and peppers evenly over the base of the pastry case. Pour in the cream and cheese mixture until it is just below the top of the pastry, then scatter with the remaining cheese, the thyme sprigs and a little nutmeg. Bake for 25-30 mins until golden and the filling is just set with a slight wobble in the centre.

9. Remove from the oven, trim the excess pastry and leave to settle for 10 mins, then remove from the tin, slice and serve.
-