Joulutortuttähdet (Christmas Star Tarts)

These popular plum filled tarts are a Finnish favorite at Christmastime.

They can be made with regular puff pastry dough (from the freezer section) or if you have a lot of time, you can use the butter pastry recipe on the next page.

1 pound pitted prunes (aka dried plums)
3 cups water
1/2 cup sugar*
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 egg, beaten

Cook the prunes in water until soft. Drain and mash until you reach a jam-like consistency. Add the sugar and lemon juice and mix well. (*I like my tarts rather tart, so I only add 1/4 cup sugar, or none at all).

Cut the pastry into 3 inch squares and make slits in the corners as illustrated.

Put a spoonful of plum filling in the center of each square, and pull corners 1 and 2 together in the center. Then pull corners 3 and 4 together in the center. You should now have a pinwheel shaped pastry.

Brush tarts with egg. (This is just to make them brown nicely and give that glazed look, it’s not required).

Bake in a 400 F over for 10-15 minutes or until a light golden brown.

Cool and sprinkle with powdered sugar.

Recipe adapted from: The Finnish Cookbook by Beatrice A. Ojakangas, p. 96.
Butter Pastry (Voitaikina)

Only use this recipe if you have a lot of time. It’s not hard and success is almost guaranteed if you follow the directions, but it takes lots of refrigeration time between rolling.

This is the standard Finnish pastry dough, it’s similar to French puff pastry, but not as difficult to make. You make two doughs – one of flour and water, the other of flour and butter – and chill both. You first roll them out separately, then together, folding and rolling the dough again and again.

2 cups sifted white flour
1/3 cup cold water
1 cup soft butter

Place 1 cup of the flour in a small bowl, and gradually add the water, tossing the mixture with a fork until it gathers together into a ball. Smooth the dough out with your hands. Place in the refrigerator and let chill until very cold.

In another bowl, cream the butter. Add the remaining cup of flour gradually, stirring well until the dough is smooth. Chill this too until cold (about 1 hour).

Roll out the flour-water dough on a lightly floured board into a rectangle about 12 by 16 inches. Remove the flour-butter dough from the refrigerator and roll it into the same size rectangle. Place the butter dough on top of the flour-water dough.

Fold the top third of the dough down over the center and roll lightly. Fold the bottom third up over the center and roll lightly to about 1/2 inch thickness. Turn the dough around and repeat the folding and rolling processes until both doughs are completely blended. (If the dough gets too warm and sticky to work with, put it back in the fridge for a while). Roll the dough into a large (about 20 in) square, keeping the corners squared. Use as directed for Christmas Tarts or other recipes.

If you have more dough than you need, freeze and save.