Technical Development and Reflective Practice in Classical Patisserie: A Critical Evaluation of Lemon Tart and Chocolate Fondant Production

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Introduction

The current reflective learning journal records my technical progress and learning during the Patisserie Development module, which was dedicated to the production and refinement of two traditional desserts Lemon Tart and Chocolate Fondant. The module has offered guided hands-on sessions that aim at acquiring professional pastry, enhancing theoretical knowledge, and provoking critical thinking on performance and progress.

This journal is an attempt to examine my experience in learning throughout the entire course, showing how technical knowledge and confidence have increased and more practical skills have developed with time. Reflection allows me to assess the difficulties faced, methods used, and progress made and can be connected to the applicable culinary theory including pastry structure, emulsification, coagulation and heat control.

The journal is intended to demonstrate my capability in producing desserts to an assessment level as well as how the scientific and technical procedures work. Lemon Tart and Chocolate Fondant were chosen since they are opposite methods of patisserie which demand accuracy, time and discipline. They can be collectively used to create a good platform that provides evidence of technical progression, reflective practice and professional competence in a patisserie setting.

Reflective Learning Journey

Lemon Tart Development

The production of the Lemon Tart enabled me to gain confidence in the basic methods of patisserie and especially on how to produce shortcrust pastry, blind baking and how to make a stable lemon curd (Magalhães *et al.*, 2023). Weaknesses in process control and precision were illustrated by my initial efforts. The first thing was that my pate sucre was not very uniform because I overworked the dough and, as a result, activated gluten and caused it to shrink and have a hard texture after baking. Tutor feedback and observation helped me realise that minimal handling and sufficient rest time is necessary to relax the gluten strands, which adheres to pastry theory which accentuates the use of cold fat and minimal agitation to obtain a tender crumb.

Figure: Lemon Tart

Source:

https://www.thespruceeats.com/thmb/PfDWjaKKOld0J00siHqY3lbbdRk=/2124x1413/filters:fill(auto,1)/155135335-58a70f783df78c345b69e914.jpg

Blind baking was difficult in the technical aspect (Schwartz, 2022). Premature shells exploded or overheated as a result of unequal weight and fluctuating temperatures of the ovens. My technique that I perfected was to dock the pastry base, place baking beans evenly on it, and to observe the heat distribution (Chen *et al.*, 2024). This enhanced structural integrity and gave a shell of nice even colour. Learning about heat transfer and moisture evaporation became necessary whereby the spongy bottom is the result of inadequate pre-baking and when stuffed with curd.

The lemon curd step needed the ability to control the temperature accurately and knowledge of coagulation. During the initial sessions, my curd was torn by overheating which showed my ignorance on the denaturation of egg proteins. I continued to bake the mixture at a low temperature that was below boiling point by placing it in a bain-marie and constantly stirring it to allow it to thicken gradually. This was a practical theory of emulsification in which butter should be added gradually in order to make a smooth and stable texture. A precision of a digital probe thermometer was introduced and enhanced consistency.

Every development phase stimulated thought and change. In this case, I added more or less zest to improve flavour and lowered sugar a notch to avoid excessive sweetness. These advancements were shown in the development of increasing sensory awareness and professional judgement. It also became better presented since I learned how to cleanly pipe,

give a smooth finish, and garnish on control, because I also learned that the appearance is as crucial as precision when it comes to professional patisserie.

There was a clean slice, glossy curd, crisp and well defined pastry case with a balanced flavour profile and a crisp, well defined pastry case by the final development stage of my Lemon Tart (Reichstadt, 2025). This development shows a manifestation of better technology and theoretical knowledge. The process strengthened the need to prepare, control temperatures and reflective practice. Every mistake turned out to be a learning experience as it allowed me to translate the theory into practice and continue to master how to make products better.

Chocolate Fondant Development

The Chocolate Fondant was a different technical challenge as this involved the critical timing, structural management and correct application of heat (Man *et al.*, 2023). In contrast to the Lemon Tart, the success was caused by the attainment of a dual texture: a set outside and a liquid inside. The first ones were an overbaked sponge therefore it created fully set centres as it was overbaked and the mould was not properly prepared. This underscored my lack of knowledge on residual heat as well as protein coagulation in batter based desserts.

Figure: Chocolate Fondant

Source:

https://www.wickedfood.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/chocolate-fondant.jpg

I was tutored on the fact that fondants depend on the controlled penetration of heat and accurate portioning. The batter, built on the foundation of melted chocolate, butter, eggs and sugar is a semi-emulsion. Excess air brought about by over mixing formed a cake like structure instead of the desired molten interior. To perfect my technique, I folded gently and put the mixture aside to allow the texture to stabilise (Premi and Sharma, 2022).

Preparation of moulds was also important. Initial trials failed because of the lack of greasing and cocoa dusting. I used softened butter on the cake and cocoa powder to clean off and increase definition. This was also indicative of professional practice and reflected the significance of mise-en place and surface preparation.

The most important invention was done with respect to controlling of ovens. I also did time tests in different temperatures and I also came to value that a difference between a success and a failure can be done in 30 seconds. This is why forced convection increased the rate of heat transfer in the fan ovens because such a method had lower temperatures. Raising the process to normalisation helped me to make sure that I preheat a specific amount of time, I bake the cookies within a specific time range, and I give them a rest before demoulding them so that the outer shell would become hardened (Bohm, 2025).

The flavours also improved. I tried the chocolate mixture by varying the quantity of cocoa that was used in the chocolates and found out that the more cacao was used the darker the chocolate but the slight proportion of sugar had to be added to the chocolate mix so as to make it balanced. It was a sign of the sensory profiling awareness and ingredient functionality.

On the last stage, my Chocolate Fondant was smooth on the surface and had liquid centre, crispy sides and professional look. Such progress will be closer to maintaining the appropriate time management, thermo-awareness and technical inflexibility (Szpicer *et al.*, 2025). The process of development supported the idea that high-risk desserts are significant with regard to accuracy and repetition (Knychala *et al.*, 2024). Compared to other baked goods, fondants have no room of error and consequently, could serve as a good indicator of professionalism.

So, it was a dessert that helped me enhance my pressure working skills, theory-to-practice and outcome evaluation skills. The cyclical developmental process turned the first failures into progressive progressions, which indicated career development in a patisserie setting.

Rationale For Chosen Exam Desserts

Technical Challenges and Skill Demonstration

Chocolate Fondant and Lemon Tart were chosen as exam desserts as they are useful in showcasing a variety of professional skills in patisserie. Every dessert must be accurate, highly

technical and knowledgeable of culinary science. The Lemon Tart offers fundamentals of pastry production such as shortcrust production, blind baking and curd production. It requires precision in temperature regulation, awareness and balance of structures and flavours. Conversely, Chocolate Fondant is a high-stakes dessert, and one that is dependent on the time and heat involved, to produce the desired set exterior with a melting centre. These desserts collectively demonstrate the use of both the stationery and time-sensitive method, which demonstrate a diverse range of skills that could be evaluated at Level 4.

Suitability for Assessment

Both desserts give definite measurable results as compared to the assessment criteria. Pastry shrinkage, curdy consistency, fondant structure or baking time mistakes can all be recognized instantly and thus tutors are able to assess technical competence correctly (Jagarlamudi, 2022). The evolution of each of the desserts shows the advancement of the approach, texture and style. Their complexity is what makes their successful implementation a manifestation of actual technical skill as opposed to mere procedural knowledge.

Professional and Industry Relevance

The menu such as Lemon Tart and Chocolate Fondant are traditional dishes in professional kitchens and therefore make them very relevant to the industry practice. Often, they appear on the menus of restaurants, hotels and the patisseries, and the chefs are under pressure to recreate them at a regular rate. These desserts require mastery and this shows preparedness to work in a commercial setting where accuracy, efficiency and quality control is a requirement.

Moreover, the two desserts can be presented professionally and refined, which facilitates creativity in the technical constraints. The fact that they are taken into the final assessment is not just a personal development but also a factor of employability since the skills acquired can be directly applied in working as a pastry practitioner.

Evaluation of Final Assessment Products

Lemon Tart

The last Lemon Tart was incredibly high as far as technological precision and professionalism were concerned. The pastry was baked well with no shrinkage which meant that the gluten was well controlled and the rest time was measured. The foundation was turning out to be volatile in defending the fact that blind baking and moisture control was a go. The lemon curd produced

a glossy and smooth touch with a clean slice feel, which also mean that control of temperature and emulsification is good (Bhatia *et al.*, 2024).

The ratio of acidity to sweetness was also fairly favourable and this provided the profile with a new and premium taste. The zest was bringing on an aromatic flavour without any bitter flavour. The delivery was good and simple and improved the use of the visual appeal without, consequently, influencing professionalism. This may be enhanced slightly by getting sharper edges of pastry which also would enhance uniformity and precision.

Chocolate Fondant

The Chocolate Fondant was successful in attaining its desired structure, which was a solid shell and a flowing molten centre. This means accurate timing on the oven and an apt amount of portions. The fondant was released easily out of the mould and the surface colour was even, which indicates proper preparation. The texture was deep and smooth and there was no graininess in it which proved that the chocolate emulsion was stable during baking (Nogueira and Guiné, 2022).

The depth of flavour was good as the content of cocoa was high, but the sweetness was controlled. The molten core increased the sense perception and proved to be effective in thermal regulation (Santander *et al.*, 2025). There was a minor discrepancy in the thickness of the edges, which implied that the balance of batter could be optimized to achieve a more consistent appearance of portions.

Overall Quality

The two desserts were of professional appearance, texture and flavour in patisserie regard. They represented proper implementation of fundamental methods and efficient translation of theory to practice. Small improvements in accuracy and finishing would bring the results to the next level of consistency, but the results were highly technical, competent and prepared to assess conditions (Wu *et al.*, 2023).

Conclusion

The reflective learning journal has revealed the massive growth of my technical skills, theoretical knowledge and professionalism during the Patisserie Development module. By the gradual development of Lemon Tart and Chocolate Fondant, I have been able to understand

the main principles of patisserie as a whole, such as pastry structure, emulsification, coagulation and heat control. Every practical session offered the possibility to determine the weaknesses, use the feedback and make some changes through the practice of reflection.

The process of development improved my self-confidence to handle precision-based duties, including temperature control, portioning, and timing, which will be necessary at a work-based kitchen setting. I was taught that regular preparation, proper mise en place and well-organized work process have a direct effect on the quality and reliability of the products. Errors were turned into learning tools, and I managed to relate the theoretical background of culinary practices to their practical implications.

The module has enhanced my critical thinking and organisational skills, and my professional resilience. It has upheld the value of drilling, appraisal and plasticity towards patisserie. I will make further refinements to my finishing skills as I will continue to work under pressure to focus better and come up with my list of traditional desserts. This will aid in sustaining growth and practicability in the industry so that its production in the future would not only be of high technical quality, but also commercial.

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Appendices

A: Food Order Sheet

Ingredient	Quantity	Storage
Plain flour	500g	Dry store
Unsalted butter	400g	Chilled
Eggs	10	Chilled
Granulated sugar	300g	Dry store
Lemons	6	Chilled
Dark chocolate (70%)	300g	Dry store
Cocoa powder	50g	Dry store
Icing sugar	100g	Dry store

B: Specialist Equipment List

- Tart rings (8–10cm)
- Baking beans
- Digital probe thermometer
- Silicone fondant moulds
- Heatproof mixing bowls
- Palette knife
- Piping bags and nozzles
- Fine microplane zester
- Cooling racks

C: Development Record

Date	Product	Issue Identified	Action Taken	Outcome
Week 2	Lemon Tart	Pastry shrinkage	Reduced handling, increased resting time	Improved shape and texture
Week 3	Lemon Tart	Split curd	Lower heat, bain-marie, constant whisking	Smooth stable curd
Week 4	Chocolate Fondant	Overbaked centre	Reduced bake time by 40 seconds	Molten centre achieved
Week 5	Chocolate Fondant	Sticking to mould	Improved greasing and cocoa dusting	Clean release

D: Recipe Specifications

Lemon Tart (2 Portions)

Ingredient	Quantity
Plain flour	120g
Unsalted butter	60g
Icing sugar	40g
Egg yolk	1
Lemons (juice & zest)	2
Eggs	2
Granulated sugar	100g

Method: Rub butter into flour, add sugar and yolk, rest dough. Line tart rings, blind bake. Cook lemon juice, zest, eggs and sugar over bain-marie. Whisk in butter. Fill shells and set.

Chocolate Fondant (2 Portions)

Ingredient	Quantity
Dark chocolate	100g
Unsalted butter	80g
Eggs	2
Caster sugar	60g
Plain flour	30g
Cocoa powder	For dusting

Method: Melt chocolate and butter. Whisk eggs and sugar until pale. Fold into chocolate mixture. Add flour. Fill prepared moulds. Bake at 180°C for 8–9 minutes.