



Easy as Pie!

"Pie is the American synonym of prosperity, and its varying contents the calendar of the changing seasons." — NY Times, 1902

As American as Pie

Pie, defined as a sweet or savory filling encased in a pastry crust, has been part of the world's culinary landscape for centuries. Pies remained strictly savory until the 18th century, when America's Pennsylvania Dutch became the first to enclose sweetened fruit fillings in a crisp crust. Since then, pie has remained a steady companion of America's home bakers.

However, if there is one task that strikes fear into the hearts of novice bakers, it is pie making. But it need not be a scary endeavor. The key is to use the right recipe and the right technique. Remember that practice makes perfect! While making pie pastry is an acquired skill, it is one well worth learning. There is nothing more satisfying than pulling a beautiful pie out of the oven...that you made! *Source: King Arthur*

Fruit Pie Thickeners

There's a whole range of ingredients that will help thicken the delicious fruit juices in your pie. Each of them behaves a little differently and has a different degree of holding power, or gel strength.

FLOUR: Lowest gel strength; gives an opaque, cloudy appearance to the fruit. Can muddy the taste of the fruit.

CORNSTARCH: Has twice the thickening power of flour; imparts a slightly starchy taste.

TAPIOCA FLOUR: Will give you a clear, translucent filling; imparts a high gloss; use with high-acid fruits.

INSTANT CLEAR JEL: Makes a fruit filling that's clear, not cloudy; has absolutely no floury or starchy taste; is stable through a greater range of temperatures (freezes very well).

Main Ingredients: Pie Pastry

FLOUR: lends structure to pie pastry. Flour contains two proteins, glutenin and gliadin. When combined with water, glutenin and gliadin join together and form gluten. Gluten is the muscle of dough, so more gluten makes a tougher dough.

FAT: creates tenderness in pastry. It forms a waterproof coating around the flour particles and prevents too much gluten formation.

SALT: adds flavor to a pie pastry. Flour by itself is very bland!

WATER: holds the pastry together. It provides moisture that, when mixed with flour, forms gluten.

Pie Pastry Tips

- Shortening, a pure fat, produces the most tender crusts. Butter imparts a rich flavor but also water, which creates gluten. Use a mix of both fats for a crust that's both tender and flavorful.
- When making pie crusts, be quick and keep the ingredients well-chilled. Handle the dough as little as possible. Try to use your fingertips instead of your hands, which are too warm.
- After making the dough, rest it for at least 30 minutes in the refrigerator. Resting the dough allows the gluten to relax and the water to distribute evenly, which will produce a flakier crust.
- Don't be afraid to let the dough "chill out" if things are getting sticky. Put it on a tray and place it back in the refrigerator for 8-10 minutes, then it will be easier to work with.
- When rolling out your dough, do not roll the pie all the way to the edge. This thins out the edge too much. Instead, lift your rolling pin about a finger's width before the edge of the crust.
- If you own a baking stone or pizza stone, use it. Bake the pie on a cookie sheet to prevent spillovers on the stone. Baking on a stone ensures that the bottom crust on even the juiciest fruit pie will be done when the top is brown.
- Protect your pie's edges! Foil is perfect to use to protect the edges from browning too quickly. Or use a pie crust liner.
- Remember, you can always patch pastry dough. Use water as "glue" to attach pieces of dough. Pies and tarts are only supposed to look perfect in pictures, not at home!

Basic Pie Dough

This recipe makes enough dough for one double-crust 9" pie. When rolling out the dough, roll to a thickness of about 1/8" thick.

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons sugar

1/2 cup vegetable shortening, chilled

**3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) cold unsalted butter,
cut into pieces**

8 tablespoons (1/2 cup) ice water

- Mix flour, salt, and sugar in food processor. Add shortening and pulse until the mixture resembles wet sand. Add butter and pulse until butter pieces are no larger than small peas. Put mixture into bowl.
- Sprinkle almost all of the ice water over mixture. With a pastry fork or the blade of a rubber spatula, use folding motion to mix. Press down on dough with spatula until dough sticks together, adding more ice water if it will not come together
- Divide the dough into 2 balls and flatten each into a 4" disk. Wrap in plastic and refrigerate at least 1 hour or up to 2 days before rolling.
- Remove dough from fridge. If stiff and very cold, let stand until dough is cool but malleable. Roll out on a lightly floured surface into a 12" circle. Transfer to a pie plate and return to the refrigerator until filling is ready. *Source: Cook's III.*

"Good apple pies are a considerable part of our domestic happiness."

— Jane Austen



Kinds of Pie

SIMPLE PIE SHELL: This pie pastry is baked separately from its contents, or "blind-baked." Bake it ahead of time by pricking the crust, placing pie weights on the crust to prevent bubbling, and then baking until golden brown. Cool completely and fill later. *Examples:* cream pies, key lime pie, fresh strawberry pie

SINGLE CRUST PIE: the bottom crust is placed in a pie pan, the filling is added, and the crust and filling are baked together. *Examples:* pecan, pumpkin, sweet potato

NOTE: A variation of the single crust pie is a crostata, which is a rustic free-form version of an open fruit tart.

DOUBLE CRUST PIE: the bottom crust is placed in a pie pan, the filling is added, and a top crust is placed on top of the filling. All layers are baked together. *Examples:* many fruit pies, chicken pot pie

Storing Pie

Refrigerate pies containing eggs (pumpkin, custard and cream pies). Note: custard and cream pies do not freeze successfully.

Fruit pies keep at room temperature for two days; you can store them, loosely covered, in the refrigerator for up to two days longer. (In warm climates, always store fruit pies in the refrigerator.)

You can freeze both baked and unbaked pie crusts. An unbaked crust will keep for 2 months in the freezer; a baked crust will keep for 4 months.

To thaw a baked pie crust, unwrap and let stand at room temperature, or heat in the oven at 350°F for about 6 minutes.

Don't thaw unbaked crusts; bake them right out of the freezer.

Freeze a baked fruit pie for later! For best results, first bake the pie and then place it uncovered in the freezer. When completely frozen, wrap the pie tightly and place back in the freezer. Frozen, baked fruit pies will keep up to 4 months.

To serve a frozen double-crust pie, unwrap and thaw at room temperature for 1 hour. Heat pie at 375°F on the lowest oven rack for 35 to 40 minutes or until warm. *Source: B.Crocker*

Bumbleberry Pie

What is a bumbleberry? Well, it isn't a berry at all. It is a combination of fruits that can include any or all of the following: strawberry, raspberry, blackberry, blueberry, rhubarb and apple. Mix and match to create your own masterpiece. This filling works in a traditional double-crust pie, as a rustic crostata, or as a slab pie in a quarter sheet pan.



1 recipe basic pie dough

6 to 7 cups fresh or frozen berries (raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, strawberries, etc.)

1 cup chopped rhubarb

1 medium tart apple, peeled and diced

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 teaspoon lemon zest

1 cup sugar (more to taste)

2-3 tablespoons cornstarch or Instant Clear Jel

Pinch salt

Pinch cinnamon

- Heat oven to 425°F.
- For filling, in a large bowl gently toss together the berries, rhubarb and apples.
- Add lemon juice and zest.
- Mix together sugar, cornstarch (or Instant Clear Jel), salt and cinnamon and add to the fruit mixture.
- Gently toss together to evenly coat the fruit. Taste berry filling and adjust sugar to taste.
- Carefully mound fruit into prepared, uncooked piecrust.
- For crostata: mound fruit in the center of a rolled out single piecrust. Gently bring up the sides to partially cover the filling. Bake on a parchment-paper-lined sheet tray.
- For a double crust 9" pie or a quarter sheet tray slab pie, roll out a second pie crust and place on top of filling. Crimp the sides together.
- Make air vents with a paring knife. Brush the top of the pie with milk or cream and sprinkle with sugar.
- Bake the pie for 15-20 minutes at 425°F and then reduce oven temperature to 375°F.
- Bake for another 25 to 30 minutes or until fruit juices bubble out of the vents in pie crust. This bubbling is a sign that the pie thickener will thicken the pie juices as the pie cools.
- Cool completely on a wire rack. Serve with whipped cream or lemon ice cream.

Rustic Apple Crostata

A crostata is a form of tart that hails from Italy. This version is prepared with apples, but any fruit filling will work. Serves 6 to 8.

1 disk basic pie dough

2 Granny Smith apples

2 Golden Delicious apples

2 teaspoons lemon juice

1/2 teaspoon lemon zest

1/4 cup sugar (more to taste)

1 tablespoon cornstarch

1/8 teaspoon table salt

1/8 teaspoon cinnamon

Pinch allspice and nutmeg

Cream & decorative sugar

- Remove dough from fridge. Roll out on a lightly floured surface into a 12" circle. Transfer to a parchment-lined baking tray.
- Heat oven to 425° F.
- Peel, core, and cut apples into 1/2-inch slices and toss with lemon juice and zest. In a small bowl, mix together sugar, cornstarch, salt, and spices. Pour over apples and toss together.
- Turn fruit mixture, including juices, onto the center of the prepared pastry and mound slightly in center.
- Turn the edges of the crust up onto the fruit. Brush cream onto the sides of crust and sprinkle with sugar.
- Bake until crust is golden, about 15 minutes. Reduce oven to 375°; continue baking until juices bubble and crust is deep golden, 30+ minutes longer. Transfer crostata to a rack; cool at least 10 minutes then serve.

Source: Heavily adapted from ATK



Coconut Cream Pie

The basic custard technique of tempering eggs then cooking slightly can be used to create any cream pie base.

3/4 cup sugar
1 1/2 cups unsweetened coconut milk
1 cup whole milk
1/4 cup cornstarch
1/2 cup whole milk
5 egg yolks
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup flaked coconut
3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 tablespoon butter
1 (9-inch) baked pie shell
Cream & toasted coconut, to garnish

- In a saucepan, combine sugar, coconut milk, and 1 cup milk. Scald mixture.
- In a bowl, whisk the other 1/2 cup milk and cornstarch together to make a slurry.
- Whisk egg yolks with salt in medium bowl. Temper yolks by adding 1/2 cup warm milk mixture and whisk well. Add yolk mixture and slurry back into milk mixture and whisk vigorously over medium heat until thickened, 2 to 5 minutes.
- Remove mixture from the heat and pour through a fine-mesh strainer. Add flaked coconut, vanilla, and butter. Whisk until uniformly incorporated.
- Pour the filling into a baked pie shell. Cover the pie with greased plastic wrap and chill completely in the refrigerator, about 2 hours.
- To serve, top with toasted coconut and whipped cream. *Source: Adapted from Emeril*

Make Ahead Tips

Most doughs freeze extremely well. Make a basic pie dough during your down time, and you can keep it in the freezer for up to two months. To freeze, roll out the pie dough into a 12" round. Line a pie pan, flute the edge, and then place in the freezer. When frozen solid, wrap well.

If you want to freeze rolled circles of pie dough, buy a package of cardboard cake circles and layer the dough between them. Just place the crust circle between plastic wrap or parchment sheets. The stacks can be stored in large zipper bags.

You can also prepare and freeze fruit fillings. Fill plastic-lined pie pans with the filling and then freeze solid. When you are ready to cook a pie, simply place the frozen filling into a pie crust and bake!

What's the Best Pie Plate?

Good crisping and browning, a see-through bottom to monitor the bottom crust, a half-inch rim, shallow, angled sides, and a low price make good, old-fashioned Pyrex a clear winner.



Notes: