

PIES FOR ALL SEASONS

with Sue Gray & P.J. Hamel

What You'll Need

APPLE PIE CRUST

- 2 1/2 cups Mellow Pastry Blend*
 - 3/4 tsp. salt (extra-fine, if you have it)
 - 2 tbsp. buttermilk powder (optional)
 - 1 tbsp. sugar (optional)
 - 1 cup (2 sticks) butter, cut into 1/4" cubes and frozen for 1/2 hour; or 1/2 cup (1 stick) butter and 1/2 cup vegetable shortening or lard
 - 6–8 tbsp. ice water
- *Or substitute 1 1/4 cups unbleached all-purpose flour and 1 1/4 cups unbleached pastry flour. Or use all unbleached all-purpose flour; you'll need to add a bit more water to the crust, and it'll be slightly less tender.*

APPLE PIE FILLING

- 8–10 large apples (about 2 lbs.)
 - 2 tsp. lemon juice
 - 3 tbsp. cornstarch or 1/3 cup unbleached all-purpose flour or 1/4 cup tapioca flour or 1/3 cup Pie Filling Enhancer or 3 tbsp. Instant ClearJel**
 - 1/2 tsp. salt
 - 1 tsp. cinnamon
 - 1/2 tsp. nutmeg
 - 3/4–1 cup sugar
 - 2 tbsp. butter
 - 2 tbsp. dark (Grade B) maple syrup, boiled cider, or golden syrup (optional)
- **Of all of these choices, we like the Pie Filling Enhancer or Instant ClearJel® options the best. Why? Because they make a filling that's clear, not cloudy; they have absolutely no floury or starchy taste; and they're freezer-stable, meaning you can freeze an unbaked pie and then bake it later without a chance of the filling becoming runny.*

What You'll Need

FRESH BERRY PIE CRUST

- 1 1/3 cups Mellow Pastry Blend*
 - 1/3 tsp. salt (extra-fine, if you have it)
 - 1 tbsp. dried buttermilk powder (optional, but it helps tenderize the crust)
 - 2 tsp. sugar (optional)
 - 1/2 cup (1 stick) cold butter or 1/2 cup chilled vegetable shortening
 - 3–4 tbsp. cold water
- *Or substitute 2/3 cup unbleached all-purpose flour plus 2/3 cup unbleached pastry flour. Or simply use all unbleached all-purpose flour; you may need to use additional water.*

FRESH BERRY FILLING

- 1 1/2 qt. (6 cups) fresh berries*, washed, hulled if needed
 - 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice or 1/8 tsp. lemon oil
 - 1/4 cup Instant ClearJel® powder or 3 tbsp. corn starch or 3 tbsp. tapioca flour
 - 1/2 cup water (ONLY if you're using cornstarch or tapioca flour)
 - 1 cup (7 1/4 oz.) sugar (increase to 1 1/4 cups if the berries are very tart)
 - Red food coloring (optional)
- *We used strawberries and blueberries when we made the pie for this lesson. However, use all one type of berry, or mix and match as your taste dictates—use your imagination!*

What You'll Need

PUMPKIN CHEESECAKE CRUST

About **20–30** cookies (2–2 1/2 inches in diameter) or 1 cellophane sleeve of graham crackers (there are three sleeves to a box); enough to yield 1 1/4–1 1/2 cups crushed cookie crumbs
1/4 cup sugar
1/3 cup melted butter

CHEESECAKE FILLING

6 oz. (2 small packages) cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup sugar
1 tbsp. Instant ClearJel® powder (optional)*
1/4 cup cream or evaporated milk
2 tsp. vanilla extract
1/4 cup finely diced candied ginger (optional, but delicious if you're a ginger-lover)

**The ClearJel® will yield a cheesecake layer that's just a bit stiffer and less likely to ooze.*

PUMPKIN FILLING

3/4 cup sugar
2 tbsp. Instant ClearJel® powder or cornstarch
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. ground ginger
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg
1/4 tsp. ground allspice
1 15-oz. can pumpkin or squash, or **1 3/4 cups** pumpkin puree*
1 cup light cream or evaporated milk
2 eggs
**Be sure to use plain pumpkin or squash, not "pumpkin pie filling."*

MOM'S APPLE PIE

Like the chocolate chip cookie, apple pie is one of those all-American treats that's as much symbol as food-stuff. "As American as apple pie" is a phrase that comes immediately to mind—though, in reality, apples are a native European fruit, and apple pie has an English tradition stretching back centuries before the American Revolution. But, "never mind the facts, just the way it is"—apple pie is America at its best.

Try this pie hot from the oven, topped with melting vanilla ice cream or whipped cream, for dessert; or cold, splashed with milk, for breakfast. Sue claims apple pie is a breakfast food because it includes fruit, grain and fiber. Vermonters eat their apple pie with a slice of sharp Cheddar "store cheese." And the beverage of choice is, of course, hot coffee.

THE CRUST

The following is our current favorite pie crust recipe. We say current because you never know when a better one will come along! This crust uses King Arthur Mellow Pastry Blend, a moderate-protein (10.5%) flour that we feel strikes the right balance between tenderness and "body." It also uses buttermilk powder (for tenderness). If you're a baker who likes to stick to the basics, you can simply use unbleached all-purpose flour and eliminate the buttermilk powder; but if you're an impassioned baker who's always searching for "the very best (fill in the blank) recipe," then give these "special" ingredients a try; we think you'll be pleased.

MAKING DOUGH BY HAND

In a medium-sized bowl, whisk together the flour(s), salt, and buttermilk powder and sugar, if you're using them. Now you're ready to add the fat. If you're using butter, cut it into into 1/2-inch cubes. Vegetable shortening can remain in a glob. Using a pastry blender, a fork, your fingers, or two knives, combine the butter or shortening with the dry ingredients, mixing until the dough is crumbly. Leave chunks of butter or shortening about the size of small peas in the dough.

A PASTRY BLENDER OR FORK WORKS WELL

Once you've whisked together the dry ingredients, use a pastry blender or pastry fork (or your fingers) to mix in the frozen butter chunks. Keep mixing until everything's crumbly; it's OK for some larger chunks of butter to remain, but overall the mixture should look "gravelly."



ADDING THE LIQUID

Sprinkle the ice water over the mixture and toss it together; add just enough water so it holds together when squeezed. Once you've added the water, gently mix the dough only until it comes together. Remember, once water is added to flour, gluten starts to develop, and this is what can toughen a pie crust. So use a light hand!



CHILL OUT

Turn the dough out onto a floured work surface and gently fold it over several times, until it's cohesive. Divide the dough in half, flatten it to thick disks, wrap it well, and refrigerate it for 30 minutes, or until you're ready to use it.



Readying the dough for the fridge...

MAKING DOUGH IN A FOOD PROCESSOR

Your food processor will do a wonderful job with pie crust dough. Place the flours, salt, buttermilk powder and sugar into the bowl of a food processor, and pulse a few times to combine the ingredients. Add the frozen butter or vegetable shortening and process, using short pulses, until the mixture is crumbly. Leave chunks of butter or shortening about the size of small peas in the dough. Sprinkle with the smaller amount of water, then pulse once or twice. Feel the dough to see if you can squeeze it together. If necessary, add more water until the dough holds together.

Here's another way to use your processor, particularly good if you're making a butter crust. First, leave the butter whole; don't cut it into pieces. Unwrap it from its wrapper(s), then rewrap loosely, and freeze. Combine the dry ingredients using the processor's metal blade, then switch to a coarse shredding disk. Feed the frozen stick(s) of butter through the feed tube; switch back to the metal blade, and pulse very briefly just to combine the butter shreds and dry ingredients. Sprinkle in the water and proceed as directed above.

A food processor makes short work of preparing a pie crust. Just be sure to have a light finger on the pulse button, as it's easy to over-process and thus toughen the crust once you've added the fat and water.



AND NOW, A WORD ABOUT APPLES

The United States is the world's largest producer of apples, and the varieties—though not as plentiful now as 100 years ago—are bountiful. Even the names of apples are evocative: Granny Smith (named after Mary Anne Smith, who discovered the variety in Australia in the mid-nineteenth century); Newtown Pippin (after Newton, New York); Northern Spy, Rome Beauty, Jonathan, Gravenstein, Winesap, Delicious... Each of these apples has its own taste and texture, its special characteristics and uses, and its own history.

Nowadays, we see in the grocery store Delicious and Granny Smiths (and maybe upstarts Braeburn, Fuji and Gala) year-round, with McIntosh and Cortland and possibly Baldwins making a brief appearance in September and October. The others are regional and brief-seasonal—maybe you'll find them at a farmer's market or at a serve-yourself stand on a lightly traveled country road; or maybe you won't find them at all, as they retreat from the current culinary scene and fade into mere historical background. Nevertheless, when apples flood the market in September, be they Macs or Cortlands or a local variety, it's time to get out the rolling pin and make pie.

Our favorite apple pie apple is the Cortland. It has a nice, tart flavor, doesn't lose its shape in baking, and is in plentiful supply here in Vermont. In the fall, the local orchards put up their signs—this row is Cortlands, this Macs, this grove is all Baldwin—and people pick their own pie and lunchbox mix of fruits. That said, we have to admit that we often make apple pie out of the apples—any variety, bruised, soft or misshapen—that the kids have left in the bottom of the fruit bin; it's that forgiving a dish.

If you're not in apple country and don't have access to anything other than Delicious and Granny Smiths, feel free to use those apples, remembering that Granny Smiths are quite tart while Delicious are juicy and sweet; you'll have to use a little extra sugar with the Grannies, and lemon juice and extra thickener with the Delicious. One of our favorite combinations is McIntosh (for the flavor) and Granny Smith (for the crisp texture, ideal if you like your apple pie filling with some "bite.") In this recipe we've used all Cortlands, which produce a smooth, almost creamy filling. To vary the texture and/or taste in your apple pie filling, try different types of apples.



PEEL, CORE AND SLICE THE APPLES

An apple peeler works very well, simultaneously peeling, coring and slicing apples into rounds with just a few quick turns of the handle (**Figures 1 and 2.**) Or, peel the apples by hand, then slice them into 1/3- to 1/2-inch slices. Core the apple before slicing (using a corer) or just cut slices from the apple till all that's left is the core (**Figure 3.**)



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

MIX THE APPLES WITH THE SUGAR AND SPICES

Put the apple slices in a large bowl, and sprinkle them with lemon juice. In a small bowl, whisk together the cornstarch (or thickener of your choice,) salt, cinnamon, nutmeg and sugar. Add this dry mixture to the apples, and stir to combine. Thoroughly combine the apples and dry ingredients; a large spoon works well (Figures 4 and 5.)

Note: If the apples seem particularly juicy and you want to be sure the pie filling will thicken, put the mixture in a heavy pot and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until the juices come to a boil and the mixture thickens. The cooked filling should be quite thick, as more juice will continue to cook out of the apples as the pie bakes.



Figure 4



Figure 5

READY TO ROLL

Remove one piece of dough from the refrigerator. If it's been refrigerated longer than 30 minutes, allow it to rest at room temperature, covered, for about 10–15 minutes, or until it's still cool, but flexible enough to handle.

To roll out the dough, dust a clean work surface with flour. Dust the top of the dough with flour. Roll it out, using short, strong strokes, starting at the center, working outwards and stopping occasionally to be sure the dough isn't sticking to the work surface. If it starts to stick, gently peel it off—a giant spatula works well here—and throw a bit of flour under it. Dust the top of the dough with flour and flip it over, then continue to roll it out to the desired size. The crust to fit a 9-inch pie pan should be rolled into a 13- to 14-inch circle, about 1/8-inch thick. We like to use pie crust rings; they help us make a perfectly round, flat crust.

Fold the dough in half, then in quarters, and lift it into the pan. Unfold the dough, being careful not to stretch it into place. As noted above, a giant spatula works really well here—no need to fold the dough, just slide it off the work surface and into the pan.

Once you've rolled the dough to at least 12-inches in diameter (Figure 6,) gently transfer it to your ungreased 9-inch pie pan (Figure 7.) Try to center it over the pan before lowering it in; once it's nestled in the pan, don't stretch it! If you need to move it around, slide it till it's better centered in the pan. Stretching and tugging pie crust is the chief reason it slides down the sides and tries to puddle in the bottom of the pan while your pie is baking.



Figure 6



Figure 7

FILLING THE PIE

Spoon the apple mixture into the crust, and dot the filling with bits of butter (for extra flavor), if desired. This filling recipe will make a normal-looking apple pie. For a “mile-high” pie, one that’s domed on top and just stuffed with filling, increase all of the filling ingredients by half.



ADDING THE TOP CRUST

Roll out the remaining piece of crust, just as you did the first piece. Gently lay it over the filling, making sure it completely covers the edges of the bottom crust. Trim off the excess (leaving yourself about 1/2 inch all around to work with.) Seal the edges of the top and bottom crusts together by brushing the edge of the bottom crust with water, then folding the edges under and crimping with your fingers or with a fork to seal. Slice a few steam vents in the top crust.

Again, a giant spatula is the perfect tool for moving your pie crust around (**Figure 8**.) Center it over the filling, then use a pair of scissors to snip off all but 1/2-inch of the overhanging crusts (**Figure 9**.) And don't throw the scraps away—put them on a baking sheet, sprinkle with cinnamon-sugar, and bake them very briefly (just till they're a light golden brown) alongside the pie. *Yum!*

Seal the top crust to the bottom crust by pressing the two together. Then, use your fingers to form a fluted edge, or a fork to make a simpler decorated seal (**Figure 10**.) Brush the top crust with a bit of milk, and sprinkle with some sugar (coarse white or Demerara, if you've got it). This will help the crust brown, and give it a slightly sweet, crunchy top (**Figure 11**.)



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

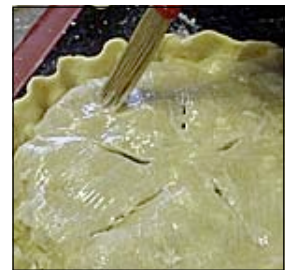


Figure 11

BAKING THE PIE

Bake the pie in a preheated 450°F oven for 15 minutes, reduce the oven heat to 350°F, and continue to bake for 1 hour or longer, till it's as brown as you like. While baking, if the edges start to brown too much, cover them with a pie shield or foil. And be sure to place a parchment- or foil-lined cookie sheet below the pie to catch any drips that boil out. The juices should boil out clear when the pie is done, but be sure to give it at least a full hour. *Yield: 8 generous slices.*



You can't beat a warm slice of apple pie. Add some vanilla ice cream (Ben & Jerry's World's Best Vanilla is our choice,) and you'll have attained Pie Heaven!

FRESH BERRY PIE

This delicious pie combines fresh and briefly cooked berries in a pre-baked crust. The texture is a delightful combination of smooth and firm, and the taste is out of this world.

THE CRUST

This recipe make a single 9-inch, pre-baked pie crust. Besides being ideal for this berry pie, it's also perfect for cream pies (chocolate cream, banana cream, coconut cream...) or other pies that include a cooked or fully prepared filling, and don't require further baking.

MAKING THE CRUST BY HAND

In a medium-sized bowl, whisk together the flour(s), salt and buttermilk powder and sugar, if you're using them (**Figure 12.**) Now you're ready to add the fat. If you're using butter, cut it into into 1/2-inch cubes. *Vegetable shortening can remain in a glob.* Using a pastry blender, a fork, your fingers or two knives, combine the butter or shortening with the dry ingredients, mixing until the dough is crumbly (**Figure 13.**) Leave chunks of butter or shortening about the size of small peas in the dough. Sprinkle water over the dough, 1 tablespoon at a time, tossing to combine; add just enough water so the dough will hold together when you squeeze it in your hands. Turn the dough out onto a floured work surface and gently fold it over several times, until it's cohesive. Flatten it to a thick disk, wrap it well, and refrigerate it for 30 minutes, or until you're ready to use it.



Figure 12



Figure 13

MAKING THE DOUGH IN A FOOD PROCESSOR

Place the flours, salt, and buttermilk powder and sugar (if you're using them) into the bowl of a food processor, and pulse a few times to combine the ingredients. Add the cold butter or vegetable shortening and process, using short pulses, until the mixture is crumbly. Leave chunks of butter or shortening about the size of small peas in the dough. Sprinkle the dough with the smaller amount of liquid, then pulse once or twice. Feel the dough (watch out for that processor blade!) to see if you can squeeze it together. If necessary, add just enough more water so that the dough holds together. Flatten it to a thick disk, wrap it well, and refrigerate it for 30 minutes, or until you're ready to use it.



Preparing the dough for chilling.



READY TO ROLL

To roll out the dough, dust a clean work surface with flour. Dust the top of the dough with flour. Roll it out, using short, strong strokes, starting at the center, working outwards, and stopping occasionally to be sure the dough isn't sticking to the work surface. If it starts to stick, gently peel it off—a giant spatula works well here—and throw a bit of flour under it. Dust the top of the dough with flour and flip it over, then continue to roll it out to the desired size. The crust to fit a 9-inch pie pan should be rolled into a 13- to 14-inch circle, about 1/8-inch thick.

Fold the dough in half, then in quarters, and lift it into the pan. Unfold the dough, being careful not to stretch it into place. As noted above, a giant spatula works really well here—no need to fold the dough, just slide it off the work surface and into the pan. Pie rings help you roll dough into a perfectly sized circle, but you can also skip the rings and just eyeball it as you go (Figure 14.)



Figure 14



THE FINISHING TOUCH

Trim the excess dough from the edges, so that you have about 1/2 inch of extra dough hanging over the rim all the way around the pan. Fold this extra dough under itself and tuck it all atop the rim. Pinch or crimp the dough to form a decorative edge. Next, you're going to “blind-bake” the crust, i.e., bake it without any filling. It's necessary to weigh the crust down as it bakes, so it doesn't bubble up; you can do this in a variety of ways. Line the bottom of the crust with waxed paper, aluminum foil, or parchment paper, and fill the bottom with pie weights, or dried beans or dry rice. Or, do as we do—set a perforated pie pan into the crust, being careful not to press it down around your decorated edge (Figure 15.)



Crimp the dough to make a decorative edge.



Figure 15

BAKING THE CRUST

Bake the crust in a preheated 450°F oven for 12–14 minutes. Remove the weights or extra pie pan and bake for an additional 6 minutes or so, or until the crust is golden brown. Remove the crust from the oven; if any parts of it have bubbled up, press them down gently.

THE FILLING

OK, the first thing we're going to do is have a beauty contest. Divide the berries into three groups. The least perfect-looking (2 cups) will be mashed and used to bind the filling together; the next (3 cups) will be sliced for the filling; and the best-looking berries (a total of 1 cup) will be used to garnish the top of the pie.

Mash the 2 cups of least-perfect berries in a medium bowl. Stir in the lemon juice or oil. A pie blender works well for mashing berries. Try a potato masher, or just a heavy spoon, too; or whirl the berries VERY briefly in a food processor or blender (Figure 16.)

If You're Using Instant Clearjel® This product is our absolute favorite pie thickener. It thickens fruit pie filling without lending it any starchy taste or cloudy color, and it doesn't need to be cooked. In a small bowl, whisk together the Instant Clearjel® and the sugar. Sprinkle this mixture over the mashed berries, and stir well.

If You're Using Cornstarch or Tapioca Flour In a small saucepan, whisk together the cornstarch or tapioca flour and the sugar. Stir in the water and mashed berries. Bring the mixture to a boil over medium heat and, stirring constantly, cook for 1–2 minutes, until thickened. Remove the berries from the heat.

Completing The Filling Slice the 3 cups of berries that you've reserved for the filling. Combine them with the mashed berries and a few drops of red food coloring, if you feel the pie needs extra color (Figure 17.) Gently stir together the mashed and sliced berries. Spoon the berry mixture into the baked pie shell, and smooth it out with a spatula.



Figure 16



Figure 17



The pie's looking good already. Who gets to lick the berry bowl?

GARNISHING

Decorate the top of the pie with the remaining berries, arranging them around the edge and in the middle. If you've used strawberries, you'll probably want to slice them lengthwise. If you're using blueberries, raspberries, blackberries or other smaller berries, leave them whole. Chill the pie for several hours before slicing.

Note: This pie is quite soft; when you cut it, it'll ooze onto the plate. It's not the "cleanest" looking pie in the world, but oh my, it's very tasty!



Here's what you saved your best-looking berries for.



Berry pie, anyone?

PUMPKIN CHEESECAKE PIE

*Ah! On Thanksgiving Day, when from East and from West
From North and from South come pilgrim and guest,
When the gray-haired New Englander sees round his board
The old broken links of affection restored,
When the care-wearied man seeks his mother once more,
And the worn matron smiles where the girl smiled before,
What moistens the lip and what brightens the eye?
What calls back the past, like the rich pumpkin pie?*

—John Greenleaf Whittier, 1844

There's no denying it—pumpkin pie at Thanksgiving has become an American icon. While some folks turn up their nose at this ubiquitous confection, for others it's a once-a-year thrill, one of the first mileposts in the annual holiday baking season.

The following is one of King Arthur Flour's all-time most requested recipes. Several years ago a picture of this pie graced the cover of our November Baker's Catalogue and we were deluged with calls and mail—*Where's the recipe for that delicious-looking pie?* With its traditional pumpkin filling poured atop a thin layer of cheesecake, all nestled in a crumb crust, this pie strikes a chord with pumpkin pie (and cheesecake) lovers everywhere.

THE CRUST

We like to use graham crackers or gingersnaps for this crust, but if you're a fan of the chocolate-cheesecake combination, try chocolate wafers. Vanilla wafers are fine, too.

In a medium-sized bowl, mix together the crumbs, sugar and butter until the crumbs are moistened. Press them into the bottom and up the sides of a 9-inch pie pan. Bake the crust in a preheated 350°F oven for 8 minutes. Remove it from the oven, and cool it slightly before filling.

Forming the Crust Press the crumbs into the bottom of the pan and up the sides; try to press crumbs all the way to the rim of the pan (**Figure 18**.) Use the palm of your hand to smooth the bottom of the crust before popping it into the oven to bake (**Figure 19**.)



Figure 18



Figure 19

THE CHEESECAKE FILLING

Soften the cream cheese by unwrapping it and warming it to room temperature. In a small bowl, whisk together the sugar and ClearJel® (if you're using it,) and set it aside.

Place the cream cheese in a medium-sized mixing bowl, and mix in the cream or evaporated milk, stirring till smooth. Add the sugar, vanilla and ginger. Use a rubber spatula, or low speed of an electric mixer, to blend until almost smooth, but don't whip the mixture; you don't want to beat in any air. Don't worry if a few lumps of cream cheese remain; once the pie is baked, they'll disappear. Gently spoon the cream cheese mixture into the baked crumb crust, spreading it evenly.



Gently mix together the cream cheese filling ingredients.



Spoon the filling into the crust—smoothing it with a rubber spatula.

THE PUMPKIN FILLING

In a medium-sized mixing bowl, whisk together the sugar, ClearJel® or cornstarch, salt and spices. Add the pumpkin, cream or evaporated milk and eggs and whisk gently until smooth. *You don't want to beat a lot of air into this mixture; just be sure it's thoroughly combined.* Gently spoon the pumpkin filling atop the cheesecake layer, filling within 1/4-inch of the top of the crust. Note: Do this carefully at first, so as not to disturb the cheesecake layer; once you've covered the cheesecake, you can be less careful.

Depending on the exact depth of your pie pan, you may have leftover filling. Simply pour it into a custard cup or other small baker, and bake it along with the pie, removing it from the oven when it appears set, and a cake tester inserted into the center comes out clean.



Gently mix together the pumpkin filling ingredients.



Slowly pour the pumpkin mixture atop the cream cheese mixture in the crust.

BAKING THE PIE

Place the pie in a preheated 425°F oven, and bake it for 15 minutes. Reduce the oven temperature to 350°F, and continue to bake for 40–45 minutes, covering the edges of the pie with a crust shield or aluminum foil if they seem to be browning too quickly. The pie is done when it looks set, but still wobbles a bit in the center when you jiggle it. *If you have an instant-read thermometer, the pie will register 165°F at its center when it's done.*

Remove the pie from the oven, allow it to cool to room temperature, then refrigerate it till serving time. Serve with lightly sweetened whipped cream flavored with a pinch of ginger and teaspoon of vanilla. *Yield: 10 to 12 rich servings.*



A FINAL WORD

We hope you enjoyed these lessons. If you ever have any questions, please call us at 800.827.6836. The bakers here at King Arthur are always ready to lend a sympathetic ear, and a helping hand!