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Best Blueberry Hand Pies

Makes 6-8 hand pies

August blueberries are particularly awesome – they burst with a flavor that only happens when truly in season. One of our favorite ways to celebrate these little nutritional powerhouses is to place them in hand pies. The berries' diminutive size fit neatly into petite packets. However, to match the blueberries' magnificence, the crust needs to be just as wonderful. Our answer is a rich crust with a cream cheese base. In our opinion, it's a match made in summer heaven!

Cream Cheese Crust

Ingredients

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon sugar
1-1/4 teaspoon Kosher salt
8 oz. (1 pkg) cream cheese
1 cup unsalted butter (2 sticks), well chilled

Crust Assembly and Topping:

2 egg whites, beaten
1 tablespoon coarse sugar for crust topping

Blueberry Filling

2 cups blueberries
3 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon cornstarch

Directions:

The crust may be mixed by hand or with a food processor. Choose your preferred method, then continue forming the hand pies at Step 6.

Mixing by Hand:

1a. MIX the flour, sugar, and salt together in a large bowl with a whisk until evenly distributed.

2a. CUT the butter and cream cheese into 1/2-inch cubes. Use a little of the flour mixture to keep the pieces from sticking together. CHILL the cubes for 15 minutes.

3a. PLACE the butter and cream cheese cubes in the flour mixture. Using a simple pastry blender, cut the butter, cream cheese, and flour mixture together until a coarse texture is reached with some pea-sized pieces of butter and/or cream cheese remaining.

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4a. FORM the rough dough into a ball using your hands and a light touch.

5a. FLATTEN the dough ball into a disk about a half-inch thick, and wrap in plastic wrap.

Mixing with a Food Processor:

1b. PLACE the flour, sugar, and salt in the bowl of the food processor. PULSE a few times to evenly distribute the sugar and salt.

2b. CUT the butter and cream cheese into 1/2-inch cubes. Use a little of the flour mixture to keep the pieces from sticking together. CHILL the cut butter and cream cheese cubes for 15 minutes.

3b. PLACE the butter and cream cheese cubes in the food processor with the flour mixture. PULSE 6-8 times to cut the butter and cream cheese into the flour. The dough mixture will be coarse with some pea-sized pieces of butter and cream cheese remaining. (Resist the urge to keep pulsing.)

4a. REMOVE the rough dough from the work bowl and form into a ball using your hands and a light touch.

5b. FLATTEN the dough ball into a disk about a half-inch thick, and wrap in plastic wrap.

Forming the Hand Pies:

6. CHILL the wrapped dough disk for an hour or overnight.

7. REMOVE the dough from the refrigerator when ready to bake the hand pies and let set for 10 minutes on the countertop while the filling is mixed.

8. STIR the cornstarch and sugar together, then sprinkle over the fresh blueberries. Gently toss the fruit to distribute the cornstarch/sugar mixture. Set aside while finishing crust preparation.

9. ROLL the dough on a lightly floured surface to a 1/8- to 3/16-inch thickness.

10. CUT circles from the dough (5-inch circles for 6 pies; 4-inch circles for 8 pies). TRANSFER half of the circles to a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.

11. BEAT the egg whites with 2 teaspoons of water, and BRUSH the egg white wash lightly on the perimeter of each bottom circle.

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12. SPOON the prepared blueberries into the center of each bottom circle mounding them slightly. Leave about 1/2-inch of the crust clear for sealing.
13. STRETCH the top circles slightly to fit over the mounded blueberries. MATCH the edges of the top crust with the bottom crust pressing them together. CRIMP the edges with fork tines.
14. BRUSH the formed hand pies with the egg white wash. SPRINKLE lightly with sugar if desired. VENT the pies by cutting small slits on the top with the tip of a paring knife in a decorative design of your choosing. (We like a simple star with five small cuts placed in a radiating pattern.)
15. BAKE the hand pies in a 400° oven for 15-20 minutes, or until the crust is golden brown.
16. SERVE warm or cooled to room temperature.