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Blue Ribbon Apple Pie

Makes 1 glorious pie – serves 8

We've often admired the stunning presentation of others' apple pies – the ones chock full of fruit - so, of course, we had to give it a try ourselves! This generously-filled pie gives new meaning to the notion of apple pie. For starters, it answers the problem of the all-too-frequent dilemma of a fruit pie slice with only 3-4 pieces of fruit inside. Plus, we've made a cream cheese-based crust that complements the apple and cinnamon flavors to perfection. Follow these directions that include a few key tips for making this delicious, well-filled pie.

Cream Cheese Crust Ingredients:

3 cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon sugar
2 teaspoons Kosher salt
12 oz. (1.5 pkg) cream cheese
1.5 cups unsalted butter (3 sticks), well chilled

Apple Pie Filling

12-14 apples, peeled, cored, thinly sliced (about 12 cups)
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (about 1 lemon)
1/2 cup water
1/2 cup white sugar
1/2 cup brown sugar
4 tablespoons cornstarch
1 teaspoons cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon Kosher salt
4 tablespoons butter

Crust Assembly and Topping:

1 egg white, beaten
1 tablespoon coarse, white sugar for crust topping

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.

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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.

4a. Form the rough dough into two equal disks using your hands and a light touch.

5a. Flatten each dough ball into a disk about a half-inch thick, and wrap separately in plastic wrap.

6a. Chill the wrapped dough disks for an hour or overnight.

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.)

4b. Remove the rough dough from the work bowl and form into a ball using your hands and a light touch. Divide into two equal pieces

5b. Flatten the dough ball into two disks about a half-inch thick, and wrap separately in plastic wrap.

6b. Chill the wrapped dough disks for an hour or overnight.

Preparing the Filling:

7. Peel, core, and slice the apples placing them in a large pot with the water and lemon juice added. Cook the apples in a large pot over medium heat until the apples are tender to the tip of a sharp knife, but not falling apart.

8. Cool the cooked apples completely by removing from them from the pot with a slotted spoon and spreading them on a large sheet pan. Reserve any pan juices.

9. Measure 1 cup of the apple juices into a small bowl. Discard any remaining juices. (If needed add water to the apple juices to make 1 cup of liquid.) Place the measured liquid back in the cooking pot. Add the white sugar, brown sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon, nutmeg, salt, and butter.

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10. Warm the sweetened, spiced juices until the sugar is dissolved and the liquid begins to thicken. Remove from heat and allow to cool completely. Toss with the cooled apples. (The juices may be thick, but once combined with the apples in the pie, additional juices will be released and will thin the sauce.)

11. Remove the dough from the refrigerator when ready to assemble the pie and allow it to warm slightly until pliable and easy to roll out.

12. Roll out one disk of the pie dough to a 1/4-inch thickness. Line the bottom of a 10" diameter deep dish pie plate leaving a generous 2-3-inch overhang. Brush the edge of the bottom crust with a little water to assist in sealing with the top crust.

13. Fill the pie crust with the cooled apples and sauce mounding them in the center.

14. Roll out the second disk of pie dough to a 1/4-inch thickness and an approximate diameter of 14-inches. Transfer this rolled crust to the top of the pie by draping the crust over a rolling pin and carefully placing.

15. Remove excess pie dough away from the top crust only at the edge of the pie plate using scissors. Trim the bottom crust to within an inch of the pie plate edge allowing it to extend past the top crust by about an inch. Fold the bottom crust over the top crust finger-pressing the edges together to seal. Crimp the layers together with a fork, finger pinch, or your favorite edge treatment.

16. Cut steam holes with the tip of a sharp knife. Brush the crust with the beaten egg white. (A teaspoon or two of water will help the egg white be easier to brush.) Lightly sprinkle coarse sugar over the top of the pie.

17. Bake the pie in a 400°F oven on a rack positioned in the bottom third of the oven, (to help the bottom crust to bake), for 65-75 minutes. The upper crust will brown quickly; after the first 25 minutes place a pie shield (or strips of aluminum foil) over the outer edges and loosely tent a piece of aluminum foil over the entire pie. Protecting the upper crust will allow the apples and bottom crust to bake adequately.

18. Cool the pie on a cooling rack for 2-3 hours before serving. Or, make the pie ahead of time the day before and refrigerate; this will help the pie and juices to set.