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Caramel-Glazed Pecan Pie *Makes a 9-inch pie, 8 servings*

A Thanksgiving classic, pecan pie, gets a little twist and drama this year. We've added a fancy way to top the pie that adds to the visual presentation and the overall taste and texture. The caramel-glazed pecans are arranged in concentric circles on top of the baked pie then treated to a shiny, glitzy top – so different from the typical haphazard pecan pieces of a regular, ole' pecan pie. The salted, crunchy character of the glaze tantalizes the taste buds with each bite. It's an easy pie to assemble with big razzle dazzle results!

Pâte Brisée

Crust Ingredients

2-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
(plus, extra for dusting)
1 tablespoon sugar
1-1/2 teaspoons Kosher salt
1 cup unsalted butter (2 sticks), well chilled
4-6 tablespoons ice water

Filling Ingredients:

5 large eggs
1-1/2 cups light brown sugar
1/2 cup white sugar
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon Kosher salt
1 tablespoon bourbon (optional)
1/2 cup butter, melted, and cooled
1 cup chopped pecans

Caramel-Glazed Pecan Topping

2 cups pecan halves
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup unsalted butter
2 tablespoons warm water
1/2 teaspoon Kosher salt
1 teaspoon vanilla

Spiked Whipped Cream Ingredients:

1 cup heavy cream
1/4 cup powdered sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 tablespoon bourbon (optional)

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Directions:

Prepare the Crust:

The crust may be mixed by hand or with a food processor. Choose your preferred method, then continue forming the crust at Step 7.

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 into 1/2-inch cubes. Use a little of the flour mixture to keep the butter pieces from sticking together as you cut. Chill the cut butter cubes for 15 minutes.

3a. Prepare the ice water by filling a small bowl with ice cubes and adding water. Stir until the water is well chilled.

4a. Place the butter cubes in the flour mixture. Using a simple pastry blender, cut the butter and flour mixture together until a coarse texture is reached with some pea-sized pieces of butter remaining.

5a. Add 2 tablespoons of the ice water by sprinkling on top of the flour/butter mixture. With a fork, gently toss the mixture. Continue adding ice water one tablespoon at a time tossing after each addition until a rough ball of dough forms. (Avoid adding too much water.)

6a. 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 into 1/2-inch cubes. Use a little of the flour mixture to keep the butter pieces from sticking together. Chill the cut butter cubes for 15 minutes.

3b. Prepare the ice water by filling a small bowl with ice cubes and adding water. Stir until the water is well-chilled.

4b. Place the butter cubes in the food processor with the flour mixture. PULSE 4-5 times to cut the butter into the flour. The flour-butter mixture will be coarse with some pea-sized pieces of butter remaining. (Resist the urge to keep pulsing.)

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5b. Add 2 tablespoons of the ice water by sprinkling on top of the flour and butter mixture. Pulse 2-3 times. Continue adding ice water by the tablespoon pulsing after each addition until a rough dough is formed. Test the dough by pinching together – if it holds together, enough water has been added. If it crumbles apart, add another tablespoon of water. (Avoid adding too much water or pulsing too much.)

6a. Remove the dough from the work bowl gathering it into a rough ball. Flatten the dough ball into a disk about a half-inch in thickness and wrap in plastic wrap.

7. Roll the crust into a 12-inch circle and line a 9-inch pie plate.

Prepare the Pecan Filling:

(8) Toast the chopped pecan pieces and the pecan halves in a 350°F oven for 5-7 minutes or until fragrant and lightly browned. Keep the chopped pieces separated from the halves. Remove from the oven and allow the pecans to cool.

(9) In a large bowl, whisk the eggs with the brown and white sugars until evenly combined. Add the vanilla, salt and bourbon (if using). Stir in the cooled, melted butter and chopped pecan pieces. Pour the mixture into the pie crust.

(10) Protect the exposed crust edges with a pie shield or a ring of aluminum foil; it will bake and brown faster than the filling.

(11) Bake in a 350°F oven for 45-55 minutes or until the center is set, yet still a little wobbly. It will continue to thicken and set as it cools. As well, as the pie cools, the filling will deflate and become level with the crust.

(12) Arrange the reserved toasted pecan halves on top of the cooled pie in concentric circles beginning at the outer edge and working toward the center.

Prepare the Caramel Glaze:

(12) In a small saucepan, combine the sugar, water, butter, salt, and vanilla. Heat over a medium-low burner. Stir initially until the sugar has melted, then allow the mixture to bubble undisturbed until it reaches 300°F – hard crack stage. Remove immediately from heat – it needs to reach 300°F, but do not allow it to get warmer than 300°F or it will change character.

(13) Working quickly, drizzle the hot sugar syrup over the pecan halves previously placed on the pie. Allow the applied glaze to cool. Practice sugar safety – this stuff is hot and sticky!

Prepare to Serve:

(14) Mix the cream, powdered sugar, vanilla, and bourbon (if desired). Whip the mixture to the soft peak stage. Cut pie slices with a serrated knife, add a dollop of spiked whipped cream, serve and enjoy!