

PUMPKIN PIE “PERFECT”

This recipe has been passed down through three generations in my family and there's a good reason why. Experienced cooks will notice two things about this recipe: first, it's not a total re-invention of traditional pumpkin pie recipes; there are similarities. However, the second thing experienced cooks will recognize is that there are several crucial details that produce a world of difference beyond the typical flat, somewhat dry, overdone pumpkin pie filling you often find lying on top of a soggy crust — a common failure of most pumpkin pies. Case in point...

Just two weeks ago, my husband and I visited one of our favorite high-end restaurants that has delivered top quality cuisine without variation for many years. Out of curiosity, we considered our server's pitch about the restaurant's new pumpkin pie. We thought it might be amazing since everything else in that restaurant always is, so we ordered one to share. But when it arrived at our table, we could immediately see the first disappointment: a totally tasteless and soggy crumb crust! Then the second disappointment hit us: way too much sugar! We left most of it on the plate. It proved to us how ubiquitous these common 'fails' are with pumpkin pie — even at our favorite go-to restaurant!

Just four days ago from this writing, we hosted our 9th Culinary Workshop this year in our home. In keeping with this Workshop's holiday theme, we served our pumpkin pie recipe with a homemade crust. Immediately, everyone at the table broke forth into effusive praise and happy groans. We hope you will, too!

There are at least two options for the pie crust: homemade or a frozen crust from the store. We greatly encourage our friends to try the homemade crust! Admittedly, it's more effort, but

you can make it ahead of time and freeze it with good results. A great recipe is only great because of all the ingredients and the unique steps built into the process. You can have a great pie filling, for example, but if the crust is disappointing, it will undermine the whole dessert.

This recipe we're giving you is for the pie you see in our video, a deep-dish pie 1½" deep and 9½" in diameter. If you choose to go with a non-deep-dish pie (about 1" deep and 7"- 8" in diameter), cut the ingredients in half and use only one can of pumpkin (or make two pies!).

The recipe for our homemade pie crust is posted after this pie filling recipe.

Pie Filling Recipe

- Pre-Bake the empty pie crust for 12 to 15 minutes at 425°. Remove from the oven and set aside.
- Use an electric mixer set on low to combine the following:
 - 4 lg. eggs, lightly beaten
 - (2) 15 oz. cans Libby's Canned Pumpkin (plain)
 - 1 t. salt
 - 1½ C. sugar
 - 3 T. pumpkin pie spice
- Scald* 2½ C. whipping cream by bringing it to a simmer until a thin skin forms on top of it. Remove the skin with a fork. *("Scald" does not mean burn. It means to heat a liquid to just below the boiling point.)
- Once the first five combined ingredients (listed above) are well-blended, gradually add to this mixture the hot cream. Mix thoroughly.

- Pour this into your prebaked pie crust. (It's the pre-baking of the pie crust that helps prevent soggy!)
- Delicately cover the edges of your crust with foil. This helps prevent the edges from getting too brown. (If you have a little extra pie filling, you might want to bake it in a small custard cup to go with coffee tomorrow morning!)
- Bake pie at 425° for 10 minutes. Then, turn oven down and bake at 350° for about 25 minutes more, depending on its size. The larger and deeper the pie, the more time it will take. It's far better to "sneak up" on the pie getting done perfectly so it doesn't dry out. This may require several quality checks as described in the next step.
- Test to see if the pie is done by sticking a knife into it 3" from the crust edge (not in the middle). When the knife comes out clean with no residue, the pie is done. Remove the pie from the oven and place it on a rack to cool for one hour or more. The filling will continue to cook while it's out of the oven.
- Meanwhile, spread out sweetened coconut on a cookie sheet and toast it at 275°, stirring occasionally to give it an even exposure to the heat. Watch carefully because when it's a uniform golden color, it's done. Don't let it get dark brown!
- This pie is worthy of only real whipped cream! So, make some with $\frac{3}{4}$ C. whipping cream, 2 T. powdered sugar and 1 t. vanilla extract. Top your pie with the whipped cream and toasted coconut, then squeal with joy.
- Finally, take pictures of it and post it on social media! Your friends will love this recipe, too!

Homemade Pie Crust Recipe

Makes 1 oversized crust for a deep-dish pie or 2 regular sized pie crusts.

- Place in food processor:
 - 1½ C. All Purpose Flour
 - ¾ t. Kosher salt
 - 1 T. sugar
- Process for about 15 seconds on medium speed.
- Add: 1 cube frozen butter cut into slices or ½” cubes.
- Process on lowest speed until mixture looks like cornmeal but there are still pieces of butter showing. Transfer to a bowl.
- Beat together thoroughly:
 - 1 large egg
 - 1 t. white vinegar (distilled)
 - 3 T. ice water
- Use a fork to blend the egg mixture a little at a time into the flour and butter combination.
- Collect the dough into a ball and transfer it to a Ziploc bag. Refrigerate for about 30 minutes to allow the flour to absorb the other ingredients.
- Flatten and roll the dough between 2 pieces of parchment paper that have been lightly floured. You may want to peel back the parchment once or twice to dust the dough with flour on both sides. Replace the parchment and keep rolling.
- Roll from the center out, turning the paper as you go.

- End up with a circle that is larger than your pie pan(s) by about 2 inches all the way around.
- Remove the top piece of paper, place the pie pan on top of the dough face down, then flip them both over to get the dough into the pan. Center it and carefully remove the paper.
- Complete the pie crust by fitting it down into the pie pan, turning the overhanging dough under and forming the edge of the crust to your liking. Poke it with a fork and refrigerate it for 15 minutes or until firm.
- Preheat the oven to 425°
- Place a large sheet of parchment paper on top of the pie dough and fill it with dry beans. Gently press the beans against the sides of the pie dough and bake for about 10 minutes. Remove the beans and the parchment paper and continue baking the crust for about 5 minutes longer. At this point, it is ready for a custard-based filling (like pumpkin pie filling). FYI, fruit pies or cold-filling pies require a different baking technique which we'll share in another recipe.

One final note:

Every recipe should be tested, regardless of its source. There are many variables that can come into play (especially with baking) whether it's altitude, humidity, ingredient brands, etc. With our recipes, we are giving you tested information that seeks to deliver the best possible outcome. However, your testing our recipe(s) is the final lap of the race!

Let's remember two timeless quotes from culinary icon, Julia Child:

"This is my invariable advice to people: Learn how to cook—try new recipes, learn from your mistakes, be fearless and above all have fun."

"I would far prefer to have things happen as they naturally do, such as the mousse refusing to leave the mold, the potatoes sticking to the skillet, the apple charlotte slowly collapsing. One of the secrets of cooking is to learn to correct something if you can, and bear with it if you cannot."