

Tommy Salami

PIE, It's all about the crust

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Prep Time*

15 minutes

Cooking Time*

1 hour

Ingredients*

Two cubes of butter (or one cube of butter and 1/4 lb of lard at Alaskan winter room temperature, (65 degrees) Two cups of flour Two teaspoons baking POWDER 1/2 teaspoon salt 1/3 cup sugar Ice water with ice cubes in it.

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Holiday Recipe Contest Tommy Salami For me, there is a world of difference between a pie crust recipe and crust making instructions. A recipe is a list of ingredients, mixing, temperature and baking time. Pie baking instructions on the other hand contain the finesse to successfully make and bake a pie. For example: "room temperature butter". In Alaska that means butter at 65 degrees F. In Baton Rouge, the room temperature is likely 86 degrees. I started baking pies in earnest on February 22nd, 1974. I have baked at least 2 pies a month since then, so my pie count is now at 1104+. That date is easy to remember because on that particular day I had cherries and wanted to bake a pie for Washington's Birthday. To get pie making instructions I called a sort of relative, Lydia Selkregg Lydia's recipe is great in its simplicity: One cup flour One cube butter Three tablespoons ice water I have used her recipe ever since with some modifications and I think, improvements. I grew up with a woman named Evil Alice Powell. Evil Alice opened the Talkeetna Motel and restaurant in the 1960's and she always had pie on her menu. She said that her customers preferred pie over cake 3 to 1. Evil Alice used lard in her crust for flakiness and I do too, 1/2 lard, 1/2 butter. From my niece's mom I learned to sweeten the crust by using barely thawed apple juice concentrate in place of ice water. These days I substitute 1/3 cup sugar. Pie baking contest winner on three continents ** Tommy Salami's pie crust recipe for a top and bottom crust pie Two cubes of butter (or one cube of butter and 1/4 lb of lard

at Alaskan winter room temperature, (65 degrees) Two cups of flour Two teaspoons baking POWDER 1/2 teaspoon salt 1/3 cup sugar Ice water with ice cubes in it. PUT an oven rack on the bottom most level in the oven and preheat oven to 415 degrees Mix dry ingredients with one of those pastry blenders / cutters. Sift the baking POWDER to avoid lumps Quickly cut shortening into flour as quickly as you can until the pieces of flour coated shortening are about the size of flat green peas quickly quickly Now dribble on three table spoons of ice water and cut into flour and shortening until mixed Dribble another three table spoons of ice water and cut in. Pie dough should start balling up. (The quicker you make the dough and the less you handle it the better) Divide dough into two balls and flatten each one into lozenge shapes. Flour a piece of waxed paper and roll out one of the dough lozenges. The rolled out dough should reach to the edges of the wax paper. Use the wax paper to lift the crust into the pie pan. Trim the crust so that it just overhangs the pie pan. Put it in the icebox for a couple of minutes while you... put more flour on the waxed paper and roll out the top crust. Take the chilled pie pan with the bottom crust and fill it with, (like apples or blueberries or whatever) Take the top crust, which is still on wax paper and invert it onto the pie. Fold bottom crust and top crust over on each other and crimp around the edge Now. brush the top crust with a blended whole egg and then pierce the top crust to vent it. Bake the pie on the rack at the bottom of the oven for 17 minutes at 415 and then turn the oven down to 350 for another 45 minutes. VOILA! PIE , it's all about the crust ** My son Gus calls me a pie braggart. I say, "celt ain't bragging if you actually done it." Now, there are reasons for following these instructions just as I have written them, having to do with chemistry and physics and finesse. It would take too much time and sound way too fussy if I wrote it all down. So pay attention. Use all your senses. Let's make pie! Okay, Okay! Some fussy finesse. I use lard unapologetically. It gives loft and flakiness to the crust. You need to add salt when you use lard as lard does not contain salt as butter does. The addition of baking POWDER gives the crust even more loft. I use aluminium free baking POWDER because a certain percent of humans can sense the metallic taste in the other kind. I insist on putting the Baking POWDER through a sieve because getting a chunk of it on your tongue is an off putting thang. I capitalize POWDER so people don't use baking soda by mistake. The reason for using ice water is that ideally you want the flour coated shortening to stay cold and not melt and come into contact with the flour. This temperature controlled blending makes the crust flakier. Baking the pie on the rack at the bottom most position in the oven is essential to thoroughly bake the bottom of the crust. Really, the crust bakes in the first 17 minutes. The initial higher temperature of 415 degrees shocks and sets the crust. The rest of the baking time is to cook the filling. The filling is cooked when the fruit starts to give up its juices. This is when it starts to bubble over and is the reason for sealing the crusts together around the edge so it doesn't drip into your oven and start to burn and set off the smoke alarm. People sometimes put a pan beneath the pie to catch the drips. If you do this, preheat the underlying pan at the same time you preheat the oven. If you are baking in other people's kitchens, I suggest laying a big enough piece of aluminum foil on the bottom of the oven to catch drips. Remove and recycle the foil after the pie is done. This will prevent those folks from cursing you when days later they bake something and the drips on the bottom of their oven burn and smoke and set off their smoke alarm. #@%*#! The QUICKLY comments are because pie dough gets tough with over handling. The generous flouring of the wax paper helps release the rolled out crust. Any extra flour visible on the crust will be covered later by the egg wash. The standard width of wax paper is roughly the diameter of

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a pie crust so you can use it as a measure. When you roll out the crust the dough should reach to the edges of the wax paper A drop of water under the wax paper will keep it from slipping around when you are rolling out your crusts. Chilling the bottom crust in the pan is so that you can press and compact the filling (of apples for example), without piercing the unbaked bottom crust with the raw fruit. And as the fruit bakes it settles. Pre compacting the filling prevents the doming of the top crust which leaves space between the filling and the top crust. Cutting vents in the top crust lets steam out and it lets you see when the fruit gives up its juices and starts to bubble up through the vents. Putting the egg wash on first and then cutting vent holes prevents the egg from sealing over the vents. Letting the pie cool to Alaskan room temperature gives the filling time to thicken. Never microwave pie to warm it up. Microwaving makes the crust gummy.