

APPLE PI

Baking delivers delicious results but relies on careful calculations and plenty of chemistry. There are three important components to this version of apple pie – the crust, the filling, and the streusel topping. The bottom crust relies very specifically on the right combination of ingredients to produce a tasty, tender, flaky crust. It also depends on the chemistry of these ingredients to interact with one another in just the right way to deliver flavor and consistency, which is just what you want in a crust. The filling relies on a combination of apples – MacIntosh, which are softer and sweeter, and Granny Smith, which are crisper and more tart – which should be cut in chunks to bake up juicy and plump. And finally, the topping, which relies on a variety of ingredients to ensure texture and taste to complement what lies beneath.

MAKE CRUST

This crust is based on the foolproof method suggested by America's Test Kitchen. A word of warning. It can be a difficult dough to work with because it is very moist. But we'll suggest strategies to deal with that. It helps to have a food processor for this but it's not required.

- 2 1/2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon table salt
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 12 tablespoons cold unsalted butter (1 ½ sticks), cut into 1/4-inch pieces
- 1/2 cup chilled solid vegetable shortening, such as Crisco, cut into 4 pieces
- 1/4 cup vodka, cold
- 1/4 cup ice water
- ½ cup old fashioned oats (reserved for later)

Process 1 ½ cups flour, salt, and sugar in food processor until combined, using several one-second pulses. Add butter and shortening and process until homogeneous dough starts to collect in a uneven clumps, about 15 seconds (there should be no uncoated flour left in the bowl). Scrape bowl with rubber spatula and redistribute dough evenly around processor blade. Add the remaining cup of flour and pulse until mixture is evenly distributed around bowl and the clumps of dough have broken up into coarse meal, probably 4 to 6 quick pulses. Empty the mixture into medium bowl.

Sprinkle vodka and water over mixture. With rubber spatula, use folding motion to mix, pressing down on dough until dough is tacky and sticks together. It could be pretty wet at this stage. Divide dough into two even balls and flatten each into 4-inch disk. You will only need one disk for this recipe. The



remaining disk can be frozen. The one you are using should be wrapped in plastic wrap and refrigerated at least one hour (or up to two days if you want to get a head start) while you make the topping and filling.

MAKE TOPPING

- 3/4 cup unbleached all purpose flour
- 1/2 cup (packed) golden brown sugar
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
- 2 tablespoon coarsely grated crystallized ginger
- 1/4 cup ground flax meal
- 1/2 cup walnuts
- 8 tablespoons chilled unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1/2 cup old-fashioned oats

It really helps to have a food processor for this but you can certainly do this without one. It might just be a coarser blend for the topping and that's perfectly okay. But if you do have a processor, blend the first 6 ingredients in processor. Add the crystallized ginger, flax meal, and walnuts and process until ground fairly fine. Add butter; using on/off turns, blend until moist dough forms (mixture will resemble wet sand). Add oats; using on/off turns, mix briefly, leaving half of oats whole. Set in the refrigerator until you are ready to assemble the pie.

MAKE FILLING

- 1 1/2 pounds Granny Smith apples (about 3 medium)
- 2 pounds McIntosh apples (about 4 large)
- 2 tablespoon juices and 1 teaspoon zest from 1 lemon
- ½ cups sugar
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar, firmly packed
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon table salt
- 1 generous teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon ground allspice



Peel and quarter apples, cutting away core and seeds. Cut each quarter in thirds to make chunks rather than slices of apples. Toss the chunks with the lemon juice and zest as you work with them to keep them from browning. Toss with remaining ingredients and set aside.

Remove the plastic wrap from the cold dough. Place a sheet of parchment paper on work surface; lightly flour parchment. Place dough disk on parchment; sprinkle very lightly with flour. Cover with another sheet of parchment; roll to 9"round. Carefully remove the top sheet of parchment and sprinkle the reserved ½ cup of oats across the surface of the dough. Replace the parchment paper (reversing it if the paper is especially sticky) and continue to roll the crust to approximately 12" so that the oats are embedded in the crust. Again, carefully remove the top sheet of parchment paper. The dough may have gotten fairly soft at this point which will make it challenging to get it into the pie plate. Using bottom parchment as aid, invert crust, oat side down, into 9" glass pie pan. Press crust gently into pie dish. If the dough is too moist to work with and it is difficult to remove the parchment paper without tearing the crust, put the pie plate in the refrigerator or even the freezer to allow the butter and shortening to firm up, about 10-15 minutes. Once the dough is firm again, carefully remove the parchment paper. If you rip the dough in places, just patch it together.

Stir filling and transfer to pie plate, mounding in the center of the pie plate, including all the reserved juices and spices that have settled to the bottom of your bowl. Gently distribute the topping evenly over the top of the filling, ensuring that there are no spaces or gaps.

Position rack in center of oven; preheat to 400°F. Place rimmed baking sheet in bottom of oven to catch spills.

Bake pie until topping is golden, about 40 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 350°F. Bake until apples are tender when pierced with small sharp knife, covering pie loosely with foil if topping and crust are browning too quickly, about 45 minutes longer. Cool pie on rack until slightly warm, at least 1 hour. Serve warm or at room temperature.