

Pastry Dough and Bob's Big Bag Apple Pie Recipes



In honor of my sister Guyneth's birthday on the 7th of July, and for anybody else interested:

For a long time I did not understand the principle of making flaky pie crust and pastry crust, so I decided to study and practice. It wasn't hard to learn because of all the cooking shows on TV, the internet, and cookbooks. However, it takes a little practice, and I did mess up some pie crust. So now I write to share it with you, and to give a couple of recipes. I have included pictures of **Bob's Big Bag Apple Pie**. That pie has earned me many special favors from my wife Maria. She loves it.

Recipes often tell you what without telling you why. Consequently, you think you can deviate without getting in trouble, and you get in BIG trouble. I encourage you to stick precisely to the recipe. I have given you some background on Pastry Dough first so the recipes will make sense.

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The Purpose of Pastry Dough

The first principle of pastry dough: we intend it to make a flaky flour-based crust that explodes into flakes when you apply a fork to it to eat, that it should have lightness and good, and that it should accompany something else such as a stew or dessert of fruit, meat, or vegetables. A flaky, puffy baked pastry tastes so good without being doughy, mealy, cake-like, or bread-like. The crispy puffiness of the pastry perfectly complements soft or gooey filling. And, you can find many ways to arrange the accompaniment for pastry:

1. Crust alone - a piece of pastry baked with sugar and cinnamon on top, a simple and wonderful treat for kids and adults; or a pastry shell into which filling will be later added..
2. Pie - a pie pan lined with pastry dough (rolled or hand-molded), filled with fruit, pudding, or meat stew, and optionally covered with a pastry crust top.
3. House - a pastry "housing" consisting of a floor and walls made of layers of pastry dough, then filled with fruit or meat filling for baking.

In order to ensure that the pastry does not become soggy, you sometimes need to pre-bake the pie crust, and then brush it with a sealant such as an egg wash during a few minutes before removing the crust from the oven. This sensible step for meat and other pies starts with a soupy filling.

How Pie Crust and Puffy Pastry Dough is Constructed

Baked pastry dough gets its flaky texture from the nature of flour, water, and fat the dough contains, and from the way the ingredients are mixed. The idea is that the final dough have streaks or layers of fat which separate streaks or layers of the flour-water dough. When the resulting dough is baked, the fat melts and steam from the moisture of the surrounding dough fills the cavity left by the melted fat and puffs the dough up.

Flour

The flour is the basic ingredient that produces dough when mixed with water. The gluten in the flour makes the dough stringy. A little oil in the mix allows the dough to stretch without breaking. The doughiness of the mixture allows it to be molded, rolled, and formed into shapes. The gluten keeps the dough together as the mass rises or expands during the baking process.

Bakers can add various kinds of herbs or spices to the flour to season it for taste. Doughs may have salt, ground anise seed, or powdered sugar added. Honey and sugar are generally not added because they make the dough sticky and difficult to handle.

Fat

Using fats like butter, lard, or leaf-lard (from around the kidneys, and excellent for pastry) gives the pastry a rich flavor. Using vegetable shortening, which has a higher melting temperature, makes the process easier. When using lard and butter, you must use ice-cold or very cold butter so it does not melt. Unsalted butter makes butter stay solid longer.

The fat **MUST NOT MELT** during the mixing process because it will blend in with the dough and make it crumbly instead of flaky. For this reason, pie crust bakers have evolved a special technique for mixing the flour, water, and fat together.

Mixing Fat with Flour

First, the flour and seasoning are mixed together. Then the fat is added by a processing of "cutting" it in until the mix is mealy, with many 1/4-inch pebbles of flour-covered fat in it. You do the cutting process in one of several ways:

1. draw knives across each other repeatedly in the mix
2. use a pastry blender tool that has a handle on top and curved sheet metal below that has been cut into several knife edges
3. use a food processor, and pulse it

Liquid

Next, you add the liquid. The liquid is normally water, but bakers also use thick dairy cream, sour cream, yogurt, eggs, and juices. The water content in those liquids mixes with the flour to produce the glutinous mass called "dough". Whatever liquid you are going to add should be blended before adding. And, the liquid must be ice-cold in order to keep the fat from melting.

Mixing Liquid into Crumbs to Make Dough

You do NOT blend the liquid thoroughly into the crumbs to make the dough. You toss it with a fork and do not handle it more than absolutely necessary. Toss until liquid soaks into the flour and begins to clump. Do NOT mix it until it forms a dough ball. If you do, the fat will be blended in too well and the crust will not be flaky.

Refrigerating Dough and Keeping it Cold

Form the dough into one or more balls, put each in a plastic wrap, and mash it into a thick pancake. If you are going to make a pie crust with a crust topping, then you should make two balls.

Refrigerate the dough for an hour or freeze it for half an hour before using it. This allows the gluten to become more binding, and the fat to solidify. You may keep frozen dough for up to 3 months, and refrigerated dough for up to 3 days.

Rolling the Dough

When you are ready to make the crust, remember that you will need to work fast when rolling the dough. If your kitchen is warm, you should get a slab of marble and refrigerate it for an hour or two, then roll the dough on that slab. Otherwise, you may need to roll some dough and then put it in the freezer or refrigerator for 15 or 20 minutes before proceeding.

You always roll pastry dough between two sheets of wax paper. Do not use a floured surface to roll on unless you have no wax paper. Using a floured surface increases the flour, presses it into the fat, and reduces flakiness. Do not roll on a cutting board, as it will absorb the fat.

Roll from the center of the dough outward. Do not roll it too flat. It should not be thinner than 1/8". Do not roll a rolling pin back and forth. Instead, roll in an outward direction, then pick up the rolling pin, set it in the center of the dough, then roll again in an outward direction. If the dough makes an irregular shape, try to even it by rolling gently from side to side. Do this process quickly. You can put the entire rolled dough with wax paper into the refrigerator if the fat begins to get too soft, and leave it in for 10 to 15 minutes.

Layering the Dough

Some recipes will call for layering the pastry dough. The idea of this is to increase the number of flaky layers in the finished pastry. Pie crust floors (bottoms) are not

normally layered, but a layered top crust can become beautifully puffy, crunchy, and delicious. To layer the rolled crust, simply remove the wax paper from the top, fold the dough, and re-roll it. You can fold it 4 to 6 times, refrigerating it between each fold. Or, you may make two separate rolled doughs, remove the top from each, and lay one on top of the other. For even more flakiness, brush or spread a thin layer of fat onto half the rolled dough, and fold the other half onto it. Then refrigerate it before rolling it. Obviously, the more fat you add, the greasier the finished crust will be.

Putting Dough Sheet in Pan

Lay a crust into a pie pan while the bottom wax paper is still attached and the top wax paper removed. Don't grease the pan first. A shiny pie pan makes the best crusts. Glass pie pans do not make good crusts. Once the dough sheet is centered properly, remove the wax paper gently. Flute the dough with fingers or fork. Don't use fingers if you are going to add a top crust to the pie later. Just make sure the crust extends up the sides, fits properly in the bottom, and covers the top lip. If the dough overhangs the lip of the pan, trim it with scissors.

Pre-Baking a Crust

If you are going to pre-bake the crust before filling it, the crust will bulge up and shrink, making an untidy mess of itself unless you prepare it properly. To prepare it, poke holes in it with a fork to let steam escape and prevent bulging. Then put something inside it to keep it from shrinking and losing its shape. The easiest thing to do is to drop another pie pan down inside the crust. A more difficult way is to lay parchment paper in the pan and fill it with uncooked rice or beans.

Baking the Crust or Pie

Bake the crust at 400 degrees in the center of the oven. Crusts should be golden, not brown. Baking time is 12 to 16 minutes for the crust alone, and 30 to 60 minutes for a pie, depending on the nature and size of the filling. An apple pie filled with fresh raw apple slices takes about 40 minutes, or 20 minutes if precooked. If you are pre-baking the crust, remove the shape-holder after 10 minutes. If you will be adding a soupy filling, brush the crust with egg wash (one egg beaten with two tablespoons of water) to seal the crust, then finish the baking. Always brush the top crust on a pie with egg wash or milk to give it a shiny glazed appearance.

Now that those preliminaries are out of the way, you can try these recipes with expectation of success.



Bob's Big Bag Apple Pie Recipe

Note: See Photos. Pie's name comes from bag shape of crust.

Pie Crust

Ingredients:

- 1 stick frozen unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup cold vegetable shortening
- 2 1/2 cups frozen bread flour
- 1/4 cup powdered sugar
- 7 Tablespoons ice water
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt

Note: All ingredients should be cold or ice cold, and should be processed quickly so they stay cold and fats do not melt or get too soft.

Instructions:

1. Put dry ingredients in food processor and process for 15 seconds.
2. Cut butter into 1-inch chunks and drop into food processor around on top of flour.
3. Tablespoon shortening into food processor in the same way.
4. Pulse food processor for 5 to 10 seconds several times until contents are mealy with pea-sized (1/3 to 1/4 inch) chunks in it.
5. Draw ice water and quickly sprinkle it all around on contents.
6. Pulse food processor in a few short bursts until dough begins to clump.
7. Remove immediately, form into ball, press flat, put in plastic bag, and refrigerate for 1/2 hour or more.



Pie Filling

Ingredients:

- 8 Granny Smith or Macintosh apples: cored, peeled, sliced, and tossed in a mixture of lemon juice and water
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- dash nutmeg



- dash allspice
- dash sea salt
- 1/4 stick butter (if salted, omit salt from recipe)
- Pie Dough from above recipe, refrigerated.
- Shiny metal pie pan

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees
2. Prepare apples and set aside.
3. Prepare seasoning mix. Put dry ingredients in food processor and mix for 5 to 10 seconds. Cut butter into 4 pieces, add to processor, mix for 5 to 10 seconds. Set aside
4. Roll pie dough to 1/8-inch thick in one huge piece between layers of wax paper. Remove top wax paper and invert and center sheet of dough onto pie pan. Remove remaining wax paper without tearing dough sheet.
5. Put apple slices in center of pie dough, heaped up.
6. Sprinkle seasoning mix onto apples
7. Bring edges of sheet of pie dough up toward center and press wrinkles together, leaving apple visible through opening at top. Do not close the opening.
8. Bake for 40 minutes.



Perfect Traditional Apple Pie

Pie Crust

Ingredients:

- ½ cup butter or margarine, slightly softened
- 1 cup shortening
- 3 cups flour
- dash salt
- 1/4 tsp. baking powder
- ½ cup cold water

Instructions:

1. Put butter, shortening, flour, salt and baking powder in a bowl.
2. Mix with a hand mixer or pastry blender until pea-size crumbs.
3. Pour water over mixture and toss with fork until moistened. (The secret to tender, flaky pie crust is to handle the dough as little as possible.)
4. When ready to roll out, pack dough in a ball like you would a snowball, the shape into a disk, and roll out with plenty of flour.
5. Bake at 425 : single crust, 12-15 minutes; double crust, 15-20 minutes.

Apple Pie Filling

Ingredients:

- 7-8 cooking apples: cored, peeled, and sliced into a mixture of lemon juice and water
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- dash each of nutmeg, allspice, and salt
- 2 Tbsp. butter

Instructions:

1. Prepare apples. Drain and steam apples.
2. Mix remaining ingredients and set aside.
3. When apples start to be transparent, drain again (quickly, pouring in strainer then quickly back in pan, so not all the juice is drained off).
4. Stir dry ingredients into apples.
5. Pour filling in pie crust.
6. Top with second crust and seal. Cut vents in top.
7. Bake on bottom rack at 425 for 15-20 minutes, or until lightly browned.
8. Cool on cooling rack

Pate Feuilletée Recipe

(Layered Puff Pastry Dough)

You can use this pastry dough for the top crust on meat or fruit pies or pies, or pastes.

Ingredients:

- 1 pound all-purpose flour, accurately weighed
- 1 pound (4 sticks) cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup heavy cream (or 1/2 cup heavy cream mixed with 1/2 cup ice water)

Instructions:

1. In the bowl of a food processor or using the flat paddle of an electric mixer, mix 1/2 cup flour with butter until very smooth. Shape the mixture into a flat square 1 inch thick, wrap well in plastic, and chill for at least 30 minutes.
2. Combine salt with the remaining flour in a large mixing bowl, and add cream (or cream and water). Mix the dough well by hand or with an electric mixer; the dough will not be completely smooth but it should not be sticky. Shape it into a flat square 1 1/2 inches thick, wrap in plastic, and chill, at least 30 minutes.
3. Remove the flour dough from the refrigerator. On a lightly floured board, roll the dough into a rectangle twice as long as the butter dough. Place the butter dough in the center, fold up the ends to completely encase the butter dough, and seal the edges by pinching them together. Wrap well in plastic, and chill for at least 30 minutes, so that the dough achieves the same temperature throughout.
4. Remove the dough from the refrigerator and, on a lightly floured board, roll it out into a large rectangle approximately 1/2 inch thick. Fold the dough into thirds, aligning the edges carefully and brushing off any excess flour. The object is to ensure that the butter is distributed evenly throughout, so that the pastry will puff evenly when baked. Wrap the dough, and chill it for at least 30 minutes. This completes 1 turn. Step 4 should be repeated 5 more times; classic puff pastry gets 6 turns, creating hundreds of layers of butter between layers of the flour dough (729 to be exact). Use as little flour as possible when rolling out the dough, and always brush off any excess. Remember to let the dough rest for at least 30 minutes in the refrigerator between turns, or 15 minutes in the freezer. This chilling makes the rolling out much easier, and it keeps the layers of butter of equal thickness. By the 6th and final turn, the dough should be very smooth, with no lumps of butter visible. Wrap the pastry in plastic wrap, and refrigerate until ready to use (up to 2 days), or freeze for future use.

Yield: approximately 2 pounds