Tommy Salami

PIE, It’s all about the crust

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

Mix dry ingredients with one of those pastry blenders / cutters. Stir 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. 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 baking 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 lozenges 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 freezer 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), like the top crust, which is still on wax paper and invert it onto the pie. Fold bottom crust and top crust over 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, bragging if you actually did it. I know, there are reasons for following these instructions just as I have written them, having to do with chemistry and physics and finesses. It would take too much time and sound way too fuzzy if I wrote it all down. So pay attention. Use all your senses. Let’s make pie! Okay, Okay! Some fuzzy finesses. I use lard unapologetically; its 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 aluminum 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 thing. 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 15 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 three folks from crusing you when days later they bake something and the drips on the bottom of their own burn and smoke and set off their smoke alarm. #/8/# The QUICKLY comments are because pie dough gets tough with over handling. The generous pouring 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 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.