

PECAN PIE

I've spent more time perfecting this pie crust recipe than any other recipe I know. It began as a basic 3-2-1 dough (3 parts flour, 2 parts fat, 1 part water) my brother-in-law Sam, a professional cook, taught me. I experimented with different types of flour and ratios of fat, mixing and cooking techniques. I think I finally got it right. The recipe for the filling evolved from one I found in the SILVER PALATE COOKBOOK. I was attracted to the description at the top of the page that said "...not too sweet."

Pie Crust: Measured by weight

3 ounces cake flour

3 ounces all purpose flour

2½ ounces unsalted butter, cut into small pieces, frozen

1½ ounces vegetable shortening, chilled

2 ounces ice cold water

Place flour, butter and shortening in a food processor, and pulse until the mixture resembles coarse meal. Turn mixture into a large bowl. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of ice water over the mixture and fold it in with a rubber spatula in three or four strokes. Repeat this process until the dough holds together when pressed. Gather it up in a ball and wrap it tightly in plastic wrap. Flatten it into a hockey-puck like disc. (I bet Julia Child never said hockey-puck) Let it rest in a refrigerator at least 30 minutes and up to 2 days. Let it sit out for 30 minutes to an hour, or until it has softened, before rolling out. Roll on a floured surface (I get the best results with a pastry cloth) until it is 1/8" thick. Line a 9" pie plate with the pastry making sure not to stretch it and that it is well fitted to the pan. Trim the excess so that a ½" of dough hangs over the edge of the pan. Wet the underside of the edge with water and fold it under to build a double-thick wall on the edge of the pan. Put a little flour on your fingers and flute the edge of the pie crust using the thumb and index finger of one hand and the knuckle on the index finger of the other hand. Place the crust in the refrigerator for 40 minutes, and then 20 minutes in the freezer. (This relaxes the gluten in the flour and prevents the crust from shrinking)

Filling:

4 eggs at room temperature

1 cup dark brown sugar, packed

¾ cup light corn syrup

½ teaspoon salt

¼ cup melted sweet butter (1/2 stick)

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

2 cups chopped pecans

1/3 cup pecan halves (enough to go around the edge next to the crust)

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Remove lined pie pan from freezer. Beat eggs well in a large bowl. Add brown sugar, corn syrup, salt, melted butter, and vanilla to eggs and mix thoroughly. Sprinkle chopped pecans in the piecrust and slowly pour egg mixture over pecans. Decorate with the pecan halves. Bake on the middle rack for 10 minutes, then lower the heat to 325 degrees and bake 35-50 minutes longer or until the filling is set (cover with foil if crust starts to get too dark). Remove from oven and cool completely before serving