

All Recipes by *Here & Now* Resident Chef Kathy Gunst

Kathy Gunst's Tips for Pie Crust

- Don't over handle.
- Avoid heat.
- Use frozen butter cut into small pieces. Some pastry chefs I know grate the butter to make sure it's still cold and in small pieces.
- Add ice cubes to your water to keep it cold.
- Some cooks like to use a combination of butter and lard or leaf lard.
- Michael Jubinsky of Stone Turtle Baking in Lyman, Maine, says: "The food processor is great for the cutting in of the almost frozen butter and lard (and yes, at times some Crisco) but as soon as you add water you start to develop gluten. Unless you're wicked fast on the off button you're apt to end up with a sturdy crust more often than a flaky crust."
- Some like to add a touch of acid to the crust to help keep it tender. Cookbook author Jennie Schacht says: "A teaspoon of vinegar in the crust helps to keep it tender (but requires letting the dough rest at least an hour before rolling). And cream cheese in place of a couple tablespoons of butter also tenderizes, adds flavor complexity, and provides enough moisture that you need less if any water."

Simple Pie Pastry

Kathy's Note: This is a no-fail pastry for pies, crostadas, and tarts, perfect for those who have a fear-of-making-homemade-pie-crust. You can make the pastry several hours ahead of time and refrigerate it until ready to roll out and bake. You can also freeze it for several months, tightly wrapped in foil.

Ingredients:

2 cups all-purpose flour

Pinch salt

1 1/2 tablespoons sugar

1 1/2 to 2 sticks butter, well chilled, and cubed (depending on how rich you want the pastry to be)

About 1/4 to 1/3 cup ice water

Instructions:

Place the flour, salt, and sugar in the container of a food processor and whirl several times to mix. Add the butter, coating it well with the flour and pulse about 15 times, or until the butter resembles coarse breadcrumbs. Add the ice water very slowly,

and only add enough until the dough starts to adhere and pull away from the sides of the food processor. Wrap the dough in a large sheet of foil and refrigerate for at least 1 hour before rolling out and baking.

Makes enough dough for 1 pie with lattice topping, or 2 pie crusts, 1 tart, galette, or crostada.

Blueberry-Lemon Pie

Kathy's Note: You can use fresh or frozen fruit for this pie. You don't need to let the berries thaw if they are frozen. Plan on letting the crust chill for at least an hour or two before rolling it out. And once the pie is assembled, you should chill it for around 30 minutes.

Ingredients for the crust:

2 1/2 cups flour
1/4 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 sticks unsalted butter, chilled and cut into small pieces
3 to 6 tablespoons ice cold water
1 egg, lightly beaten, optional glaze

Ingredients for the filling:

3 1/2 cups blueberries, fresh or frozen (if frozen, do not thaw)
1/4 cup maple syrup, plus 1 tablespoon
1/4 teaspoon grated lemon zest
1 tablespoon flour
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger

Instructions:

To prepare the crust: Mix the flour, sugar, ginger, and salt in a large bowl. Add the butter and, using a pastry cutter or your hands, break the butter up into the flour mixture until it resembles coarse breadcrumbs. Mix in the 3 tablespoons of the water, adding more if needed, until the dough begins to come together and there is no excess flour in the bottom of the bowl. Add another tablespoon or two of water if needed. Divide the dough in half and mound them each into a round, flat disc, and wrap each in a large piece of plastic wrap. Chill for at least an hour, or up to 48 hours.

To prepare the filling: Gently mix the blueberries with the maple syrup, lemon zest, flour, and vanilla and ginger until the blueberries are well coated.

Sprinkle a clean work surface with flour. Remove one of the chilled dough circles and roll it out to a circle about 11 inches across. Place the circle into a 9-inch pie plate, allowing the edges to fall over the sides of the pie plate. Place the blueberry mixture inside the dough. Roll out the other piece of dough to a circle about 11 inches across. Using a pizza cutter or a small, sharp knife, cut strips about 1/2-inch thick out of the dough. Place the strips on top of the fruit filling, creating a criss-cross lattice pattern. Trim off any excess crust and crimp the edges of the dough together, creating a decorative pattern.

Place the pie in the refrigerator for at least 15 to 30 minutes and up to several hours.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Place the pie on a cookie sheet and brush the pastry with the beaten egg, if desired. (It will make the crust shiny and golden.) Bake for 40 minutes. Reduce the heat to 325 and bake another 10 to 12 minutes, or until the crust is golden brown and the filling is bubbling. If the pie begins to brown too fast, cover loosely with a sheet of aluminum foil. Let the pie cool slightly before cutting.

Serves 6.

Walnut-Maple Pie

Kathy's Note: What are the holidays without nut pie? You can use walnuts or pecans or a combination. Although there is light corn syrup in this recipe, the maple flavor is what comes shining through.

Ingredients:

1/2 recipe **Simple Pie Pastry**, above

2 eggs

2 tablespoons melted butter

1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

1/3 cup maple syrup

1/4 cup light corn syrup

1 3/4 cups pecan halves, or walnuts or a combination

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Roll out the pastry and line a round 9-inch tart pan or 4 small tartlet pans. Place on a cookie sheet.

In a large bowl, whisk the eggs. Add the melted butter, vanilla, maple syrup, and corn syrup and beat well. Add the pecans/walnuts and pour the mixture into the pie shell. Place on the middle shelf of the oven and bake about 45 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool completely.

Serves 6.

Apple-Pear Crostada

Kathy's Note: This crostada (also called a galette) looks like a rustic French tart, with the sweet, tart flavor of apples. The galette can be served immediately from the oven or room temperature. Serve within several hours.

Ingredients:

2 tart apples, peeled, cored, and cut into thin slices (1/4-inch at thickest side)*
1 pear, peeled, cored and cut into thin slices
1 teaspoon lemon juice
1 1/2 tablespoons apple cider
2 tablespoons flour
2 tablespoons sugar, plus more for dusting crust
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
Pinch ground allspice
1/2 recipe **Simple Pie Pastry**, chilled

*Use a variety of tart seasonal apples. They don't need to be the same variety.

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicon baking mat and set aside.

In a large bowl, mix the apples and pears with the lemon juice and cider and half the cinnamon, ginger and allspice and set aside. In a small bowl, blend the flour, 2 tablespoons sugar, and remaining cinnamon, ginger and allspice together.

Roll the chilled dough out into a circle about 1/4-inch thick and 10-inches in diameter. Transfer the crust to the baking sheet. Sprinkle about half the flour/sugar mixture onto the center of the crust, leaving the outer 2 inches empty. Mix the rest of the flour/sugar mixture into the apples and pears, and stir to blend. Pile the apples into the center of crust, over the flour (or arrange in concentric circles, if you have the patience). Fold the empty edges of the crust up and over the apples in roughly 4-inch sections, using your hands to press each section to the preceding layer of dough. (You can also use a little water to help the dough stick together.) If the dough is soft, refrigerate 30 minutes, until firm.

Sprinkle the dough with sugar, and bake for 45 to 60 minutes, or until the crust is golden brown and the apples are soft and browned on top. Let cool 10 minutes on the baking sheet, and then transfer to a serving platter.

Serves 4 to 6.

Holiday Variations:

- Toss 1/8 cup chopped crystallized ginger with the apples.
- Add 1/3 cup whole fresh cranberries
- Add a splash of rum instead of, or in addition to, apple cider