

My Standard Pie Crust

Makes 1 double-crust or latticed top pie.

Ingredients

2.5 c All-purpose flour
1t salt
0-2T sugar (depending on pie)
8T chilled unsalted butter
6T chilled crisco (I keep it in the freezer)
7T-8T ice water

Note on fat: you can use all butter, all lard, all Crisco (Ick), basically solid fats work. I haven't tried cold coconut oil, but it would be worth an experiment if you were making a coconut pie or something tropical.

Instructions

I used to always use the food processor to make my dough. Then one day out of the blue, I decided to forego the chore of getting it out and to do all of my mixing with my hands, as Cleone had done. I haven't looked back.

Put flour, salt, and sugar in mixing bowl and stir it together to evenly distribute ingredients. Feel free to use a spoon or a whisk.

Next cut butter and fat into chunks. I prefer doing this with a knife, as the warmth of your hands tends to melt the fat and you want to have pieces of fat visible in your final dough, Mix into flour mixture loosely. Working quickly, pinch and mix chunks into the flour, but just to the point where none of the fat is sticking to your fingers, and it looks like a mix of meal and lumps.

Drizzle ice water over the top. I usually start with 7 tablespoons, mix together rapidly with the other ingredients. When water is incorporated pinch a small amount together to see if it stays together. If it doesn't, add a little more water until it does.

When it looks and feels good to you, dump dough onto a surface. I use a piece of parchment paper.

Press dough together until it forms a solid mass. I do this by folding parchment paper around it to keep my hands relatively dough-free.

Divide dough into to equal parts. I eyeball it.

Form each part into round disks that are about a half inch thick. You should be able to see pieces of butter in the dough at this point.

Turn on oven to pre-heat to 400°F.

Wrap in the parchment paper and put in the fridge or freeze to chill while you work on your filling. You can leave it in the fridge for several days, or you can even freeze it for use at a later date (but you will have to thaw it well before you use it).

When you are ready, to roll out your dough, sprinkle a surface with flour. I have a silicone pastry mat, but have rolled it on the counter, a wooden board, and even on parchment a time or two.

Take a round of dough out of the fridge and start rolling gently from the center of the disk outward in all direction. If you have a rolling pin with handles, I have found that it works better not to use them. Put pressure directly on the roller. After I have rolled a bit, I pick the round up, refresh flour underneath, and flip the disk over. Rotate dough, and keep it free from sticking. If you didn't put enough water in, you will get a lot of cracks, but don't despair. Your crust will be hard to handle, but it will work out in the end. A crust that is too dry is better than one that is too wet in the end. A lesson for the next time. I roll mine out so that it is about 14" in diameter for a deep dish pie. Gently, lift one edge of crust over the rolling pin, and use the rolling pin to release and carry the crust to your pie plate. Lay it in loosely so that you can adjust the position. Then press crust into bottom. If you have broken bits or thin coverage you can patch with excess dough.

Fill pie. Brush crust with an egg-white and water mixture and sprinkle with sugar. I used decorative clear crystallized sugar, but you can use regular granulated if you don't have it, or omit it altogether, depending on what kind of pie you are making.

Put pie in oven and decrease temperature immediately to 375° F, bake for 50 minutes or so. If it is a fruit pie, it should be bubbling up through the vents or latticed top. If it isn't, leave it in for a few minutes. If your oven runs hot and you find the edges are getting too dark, protect edges with foil. We sure to put a cookie sheet under your pie in case it overflows.

Just a few different pies that I have made with this crust recipe. The principles you learn in making this basic crust will transfer to other crust recipes too! Good Luck and happy baking.