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THE PIE CONTEST

HOW TO HOST YOUR OWN PIE CONTEST

Invitations:

Send out three weeks in advance so contestants have a chance to practice pie baking and find their costumes. Old advertising cookbooklets contain fun graphics for your invitation.

Include and elaborate on “rules,” such as:

- Bring a pie that you bake (or a friend who bakes pie)
- No store-bought crust or canned filling
- Come dressed in pre-1970 pie era attire

Set a time frame such as:

Arrive at 2:00; begin judging 2:30. Award prizes at 4:00.

Categories:

Contestants pick the categories, the more the better!

- Fruit
- Nut (pecan, peanut butter, walnut)
- Cream (filling cooked separate, added to a baked crust)
- Custard (filling cooked in the crust)
- Chiffon, mousse and whipped things some people call pie
- Ugly (you must choose to enter this category)
- Sugar (brownie, mudpie)
- Heirloom (old-fashioned, from a passed-down recipe)
- Cobbler, crisp, or quick pie
- Savory meat or vegetable
- Youth

Possible retro prizes:

Shop on-line auctions, antique stores, estate auctions and yard sales. Most of these can be found for \$1-\$10:

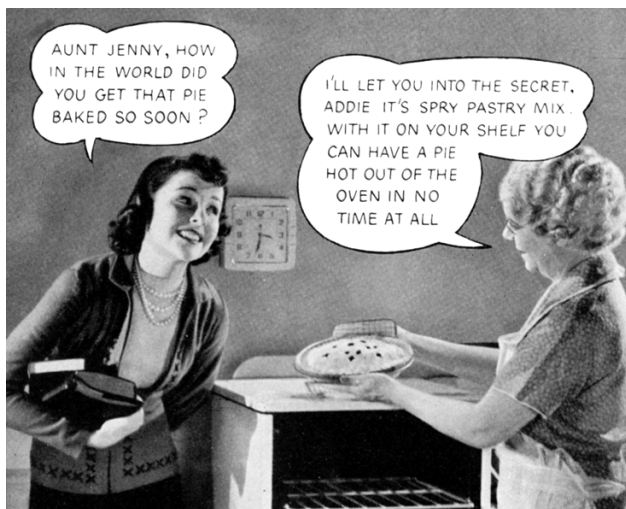
Wood handle pastry cutters, pie jagger/crimpers, pie wedges, well worn rolling pins, vintage glass pie plates and tins, retro kitchenware, gently used crocheted pot holders, aprons, aprons, and aprons.



Photo by Richard Renfro

THE PIE AUNTS

AUNT JENNY



The hit radio program *Aunt Jenny's Real Life Stories* debuted on CBS in 1937. Aunt Jenny, played by Edith Spencer, narrated short stories about the everyday adventures of residents of small town Littleton. Following the show, Aunt Jenny would enthusiastically share a recipe featuring the show's sponsor, Spry shortening. Edith Spencer also appeared in Spry's very entertaining recipe cookbooklets until some time in the 1940's, when she left the show. The absent Edith appeared as a cartoon in the 1949 recipe book, and then in 1953, the new Aunt Jenny was altogether tame. The still inexpensive cookbooks are easy to find and they are a scream.

*The many
faces of
Aunt Jenny*



Late 1930's



1949



1953

FRUIT PIES

FRESH STRAWBERRY PIE

Spring's here, and it's strawberry picking time! Homegrown berries are an absolute must for this refreshing pie. The sweet, small-to-medium sized, red, ripe berries work best. For an extra special treat, spread a thin layer of lemon curd on the bottom of the baked and cooled crust before setting your berries in, and opt for flavored liquor in the filling.

3 pints fresh strawberries

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar

3 Tbs. cornstarch dissolved in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water

2 Tbs. lemon juice or black raspberry liquor

A baked and cooled 9-inch pie crust

Slice the caps off washed and dried strawberries. Place two cups of berries in a saucepan and crush with a potato masher. Add sugar (more or less to your taste) and cornstarch dissolved in water. Bring slowly to a boil, stirring constantly. Simmer on low heat until thickened and clear, about 5 more minutes. Remove from stove, stir in lemon juice, and allow it to cool until it's just a bit warm. At this point, you can place the strawberries in a baked crust pointed side up and pour glaze over, or you can stir in halved berries, then pour into your crust. Chill at least 3 hours until glaze sets up. Serve with freshly whipped cream.



The "Pie King," Monroe Strause shows off his fragrant pie.

LEMON PIES

TWO CRUST LEMON PIE RECIPT, 1884

From a 19th-century Pennsylvania Handwritten Recipe Journal

Our good-natured office staff has been taste-testing an awful lot of pies lately. So when our Marketing Director, David Currier, said to me days after sampling, "I just can't stop thinking about that lemon pie," I knew we had a winner. It's a beautiful, twangy old, old, old-timey pie that's a snap to make and a good choice for those of us who aren't wild about meringue.



"To make a good Lemon Pie, take the juice and grated rind of one lemon, one cup of water, one tablespoonful of cornstarch, one cup of sugar, one egg, and a piece of butter the size of a small egg. Boil the water, wet the cornstarch with a little cold water and stir it in; when it boils up, pour it on the sugar and butter; after it cools, add the egg and lemon; bake with an under and upper crust. This makes the best Lemon Pie that it was ever my good fortune to taste."

Author's note: I really want you to try this pie, so here's an easier version. I've cut down on the sugar and water for increased "twang."

¾ cup sugar

¾ cup cold water

1 heaping Tbs. cornstarch

1 egg

1 lemon, juice and rind

1 Tbs. butter

Stir cornstarch into the water, add sugar and simmer on low heat about three minutes. Let cool a few minutes while you roll out your crust. Whisk in whole egg, lemon juice and rind, and pour into an 8-inch unbaked crust. You can add a top crust if you like, but it's not necessary. Bake on bottom rack of oven at 400° for about 20 minutes until filling bubbles and crust is brown. Let it cool to room temperature, then refrigerate until firm. Serve with a little whipped cream.

CUSTARD PIES

MRS. VAUGHAN'S CHESS PIE

Galax Cook Book: Recipes from Old Virginia, 1976

Definitely a southern pie, this one. It's loaded with the Southerner's best friends ... sugar and butter. Known to early Americans as Transparent Pudding, this ultra rich tart is not meant to be eaten in big slabs. Just a little slice of fabulous Lemon, Chocolate, or Os-Good (oh, so good) Chess Pie is the perfect finish to a dinner of lettuce!

1 cup sugar ($\frac{3}{4}$ is plenty)

2 eggs

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter ($\frac{1}{4}$ is plenty)

6 Tbs. milk (buttermilk is good)

Vanilla (1 tsp.)



“This makes one full pie. Top with whipped cream.”

Author's note: Beat eggs and sugar until fluffy. Beat in milk and melted butter. Pour into unbaked 9-inch pie plate. Bake at 325° on lowest oven rack about an hour.

Lemon: Add juice and rind of a lemon

Chocolate: Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup melted semisweet chocolate chips

Os-Good: Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup raisins and/or pecans

You can make all three at once by dividing the filling, adding the different flavorings to each, and baking in 6-inch individual pie plates.

TRANSPARENT PUDDING

The Great Western Cook Book or Table Receipts, 1857

“Take half a pound of loaf-sugar, put it in a saucepan; break on it eight eggs, beat them well together; then add half a pound of butter, beat it again; add a nutmeg, sit on the fire; stir it till it thickens a little, but do not let it cook. Spread your pans with rich crust, pour it in, and bake in a moderate oven.”

CUSTARD PIES

OLSON'S PINTO BEAN PIE

Here's an interesting and tasty version of "mock" pecan pie that my friend Marilyn Huff makes. If you ask her, is it "PEE-CAN" or "PUH-KAHN?," she'll tell you this: "In Georgia, where I come from, a pee can is something you stick under the bed at night!!!" Her husband, Olson, is mighty fond of pinto beans, so when they eat pie, this is the one she makes.



Photo by Richard Renfro

Marilyn Huff and her
Pinto Bean Pie

½ cup cooked pinto beans

½ cup butter

½ cup chopped pecans

1 cup sugar

Pinch salt

½ can angel flake coconut

2 eggs

1 tsp. vanilla

If you use canned pinto beans, be sure they're unseasoned. Mash them well and add a little of the broth. Beat eggs and add with all other ingredients. Mix well and pour into a 9-inch unbaked pie shell. Bake 45 minutes at 325° on lowest oven rack until done. Unlike traditional custard pies, this one freezes well.

Author's note: You can substitute brown sugar for half of the white, and if you're watching your fat intake, decrease the butter to ¼ cup.



Dried Apple Pies

The Ladies Home Journal, September, 1886

*I hate, abhor, detest, despise,
Abominate dried apple pies!
Tread on my toes and tell me lies,
But don't give me dried apple pies!*

NUT PIES

BOURBON PECAN PIE

Here's a pecan pie without the gooey filling under the nuts. The brown sugar gives it a pretty, crunchy, homey glaze on top.



2/3 cup light corn syrup

1/2 cup brown sugar

2 eggs

Pinch salt

1 1/2 cup pecans

2 Tbs. melted butter

2 Tbs. Bourbon or brandy

1 tsp. vanilla

Coarsely chop pecans. Whisk together remaining ingredients, and stir in the nuts. Pour into unbaked crust and bake in a 350° preheated oven on the bottom rack about 40 minutes or until golden brown on top.

VARIATIONS:

Chocolate: Melt 4-6 oz. bittersweet chocolate with the butter

Honey: Substitute 1/3 cup honey for half of the corn syrup

Maple: Substitute 1/3 cup maple syrup for half the syrup

Honey Walnut: Substitute walnuts for the pecans, honey for half of the corn syrup, and add 1/4 cup heavy cream instead of the bourbon.

LOUISIANA PEANUT PIE

French Acadia Cook Book, 1955

Make this terrific pie the day before you want to eat it, and serve well-chilled with a little semisweet chocolate drizzled on top.

3/4 cup white corn syrup

3/4 cup brown sugar

2 eggs

2 Tbs. melted butter

1 tsp. vanilla

1 1/4 cups peanuts

Coarsely chop very lightly salted peanuts. Blend other ingredients, and stir in peanuts. Bake on lowest shelf of a 350° oven for 45 minutes or until crust is light brown and filling firms up.