

Pie Crust Ingredients

All purpose unbleached flour, about 3 cups. King Arthur recommended, organic if possible.

Sea salt or any other kind of fine salt (not Kosher!)

1/2 lb. unsalted butter. Any will do but European butters are great and so is Trader Joes. My recent favorites are President, Vital Farms and Nellie's. Also Plugra.

Ice water

About a tablespoon of cider vinegar or fresh lemon juice

Pie Crust Equipment List

To make a great pie crust, you need a bare minimum of equipment. However, you can check out King Arthur, Williams Sonoma, Sur la Table, Amazon, Bake Deco, etc. for every kind of pie equipment you never know you needed. When starting to make pie crust, it's best to make in a bowl, by hand. After you get the hang of it, a food processor is useful if you have one.

The basics:

Bowl

Fork

Small sharpish knife

Liquid measuring cup

Dry measuring cups

Measuring spoons

Rolling pin

Plastic wrap

Pastry brush (you can use a paper towel)

Wooden board or any countertop

Pie weights for blind baking (ceramic or even better 2 lb. dried beans)

Pie plates ...We prefer shallow 9 inch glass pie plates. Vintage clear Pyrex or Fire King are great because the glass is thin, but modern versions will do. Shallow ceramic rimmed and silicone coated steel "USA pan" will produce a dandy pie.

Good to have:

Bench scraper (Great tool but a knife will do)

Pastry blender/cutter (Nice to have but your hands will work as well)

Scale (Optional but highly recommended. Escali scales are \$25 and reliable)

Pastry wheel (Fun but a knife will do)

Decorative cut outs (Tiny cookie cutters and plunger cutters are fun)

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Barb's Butter Pie Crust

(Top and bottom for 9-inch pie)

A 1-2-3 pie pastry that's 3 parts flour to 2 parts butter to 1 part water & 1 scant tsp. salt per 8 oz. butter. Make your dough the night before you bake!

2 1/2 cups/12 oz./340 grams all purpose flour, start with King Arthur AP

8 oz. cold unsalted butter (2 sticks), European preferred if possible

Scant 1 teaspoon fine sea salt

About 1.5 tsp. lemon juice or cider vinegar stirred into

1/2 cup ice cold water

Process:

Combine flour and salt in your bowl. Cut the butter into 1/2 inch cubes. Divide the cubes into two piles. Add one pile of cubes to your flour mixture and blend quickly with fingertips until it's the texture of corn meal. (pop into freezer a minute if your mixture is not cold to touch). Now, add the other pile of butter cubes. Use a pastry cutter or fingertips to cut the butter into the flour until the fat is the size of peas. Now sprinkle in enough of the water into your flour and butter until a small amount of the dough holds together. Look for moist crumbs.

The Schmear (fraisage) for extra flakiness, entirely optional. This step only works if your butter is still cold, if not freeze dough for a few minutes.

Toss the cold dough pieces onto a counter or board and divide into two piles. Take the first pile of crumbs and make a line across the bottom of your board. Using the heel of your hand, schmear the crumbs across the board and then stack the flattened smears. Form into a patty and wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight or up to three days. Repeat with the second pile of crumbs.

Skip the schmear? Divide your moistened dough into two piles, and wrap each pile in plastic wrap. Flatten your packets lightly with a rolling pin.

Questions for Barb or Annie? Please contact us!

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Par and Blind Baked Crusts

These are just pre-baked pie crusts. Par (partial) baking of crusts is usually for custard fillings. Half bake the crust and then add filling and continue to bake until done. Blind bake (totally bake) a crust when you add a cooked filling that does not need more baking. Except if your filling is topped with meringue, in which case you place your cooked filling in the prebaked pie shell, top with meringue and then bake a few minutes more.

To Parbake:

Roll out your pie crust, ease it into your pan, crimp and then refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. Meanwhile preheat your oven to 425. Remove crust from fridge, fork the bottom and sides well. Cut a piece of parchment paper a bit bigger than the size of your pie plate, place it in your pie crust and fill to the top with beans. This keeps the sides from slumping down when the crust bakes. Place the pan in the bottom third of your oven. After about 10 minutes, turn the oven to 400 and continue to bake a few minutes more. Remove the bean weights and parchment, re-prick here and there and put the pie back in the oven until the crust is a light brown and the center is dry but not brown, about 5 or so minutes. Let it cool before proceeding with your pie.

To Blind Bake:

Don't leave the kitchen or get distracted for this one! Follow above directions, but continue to bake the crust until golden brown in center and also underneath the crust (you can take the pie out and pull up the crust with a spoon and peek at the bottom if you don't have a glass pie plate).

A few tips:

I don't have any luck with any sort of deep dish par or blind bake, maybe you will. I advise you to stick to shallow pie plates to start.

Instead of using pie weights/beans, I cover the chilled raw crust with a parchment square and then stick another slightly smaller pie plate on top to hold the crust down. Look around your kitchen and see if you have something that will work if you don't have two pie plates. We'll discuss in class.

Don't leave the kitchen or rely on a timer when blind baking. You have to keep an eye on the crust!!! Underbaked pie crusts are insipid and icky and charred crusts will make you cry.