

To begin, start with making the crust. Stir the flour and salt together. Gently blend the shortening into the flour mixture with your hands or a pastry cutter until the mixture is crumbly and chunky. (I prefer using my hands because I find it easier to control how much the shortening is broken up into the flour. I squash the shortening into the flour then carefully sift through with my fingers to find and smash the bigger pieces.) When coarsely mixed, set this mixture aside.

Beat the egg and cold water together. Add the apple cider vinegar to the egg mixture. Pour the liquid mixture into the flour mixture and lightly fold them together. Let it sit for a few minutes to let the water start to absorb. Using your hands again, mix until a dough forms. If it is still too crumbly to become cohesive, add an additional 1-3 tablespoons of cold water. Be careful to not over mix as over working pie crust makes it tough, or add too much water because the dough will become too sticky. When it becomes a workable dough, check to make sure you can see marbling from the shortening—if you can, you're going to have a yummy, flaky crust.

Score the dough down the middle with the edge of your hand and pull it apart into two pieces. Shape them into two round discs, wrap them in plastic wrap, and then chill them for one hour in the refrigerator (if you're in a hurry you can put them in the freezer for half an hour).

While the dough is chilling, make the apple filling. In a heavy sauce pan, whisk together the sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cornstarch. Stir in the apple cider and lemon juice. Cook on medium heat until thick and bubbly. When finished, scoop the sauce into a bowl and chill in the refrigerator.

Begin preparing the apples. Peel, core, and slice them into about ¼ inch slices and place them in a microwave safe bowl. When they are all cut, cover the bowl with plastic wrap and microwave for 2 minutes. Then stir the apples and microwave for another 1-2 minutes. At this point the apples will be warm and starting to soften. Stir in the cooled sauce and place back in the refrigerator.

To make the bottom pie crust, take one of the cooled dough disks out of the fridge. On a floured surface, roll the dough from the center out into a circle until about 3/8 of an inch thick. Check to see if it will be big enough for your pie pan by holding the pan topside down over the dough. You will want the dough to be 1-1.5 inches larger than your pie pan all the way around. When you are finished rolling it out, carefully fold the dough in half and then in fourths to pick it up and transfer it to your pie pan. Press the dough into the pan to remove any air pockets. (Note: If you are making a different type of pie and only want a bottom crust, shape the edges and poke holes in the bottom of the dough to help it not bubble up.) Put the bottom crust in the freezer for 10-15 minutes to get it cold again.

Pour the apple filling into the bottom pie crust. Carefully move apple slices around until all the sides are filled and the top is even, without any apples sticking up which would protrude through the crust. Put it back in the refrigerator while you roll out the other dough disk. Decide what style top you want to make:

For a traditional top crust, lay the rolled out dough on top of your pie. Trim any side with excess dough to just even it up, but still leave as much length as you can. Roll the two crusts together, bottom side up all the way around, then crimp the edges. (There are many ways to crimp the edges. I use my thumb and pointer finger and pinch the edges to make a wavy look, but pressing down with a fork is easy and works too.) If part of the edge isn't as thick, tuck some of the excess dough inside and roll the dough over it and it will plump it up. Cut slits in the top crust to allow air to escape. Brush it lightly with whole milk, avoiding the crimped edges, and sprinkle with coarse sugar.

For a lattice top crust, roll the dough out, cut into 1-inch strips with a pizza cutter, then alternate laying the strips down in a lattice pattern. (If you run out of strips, trim the excess length off of the ones you have already used and pinch them together to make more strips.) Trim the strips to the length of the bottom crust and roll the bottom crust up, tucking the strips in as you go. Crimp the edges. When you are finished, there is no need to cut slits in the dough, but still gently rub milk onto the top with your fingers and sprinkle with coarse sugar.

Bake at 400 degrees for 20 minutes, then (leaving the pie in the oven) reduce the heat to 350 degrees and bake for another 30-40 minutes until the crust is golden brown.

Allow the pie to cool and rest at least for an hour or two before cutting it to allow the juices to thicken. And of course, it must be served with vanilla ice cream!

Hope you enjoy the oohs and ahhs from your family and friends as they eat your beautiful and delicious apple pie!