



Blueberry Pie

From Cook's Country

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WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: We wanted a pie that had a firm, glistening filling full of fresh, bright flavor and still-plump berries. To thicken the pie, we favored tapioca because it didn't mute the fresh yet subtle blueberry flavor as cornstarch and flour did. A second inspiration came from a peeled and grated Granny Smith apple. Apples are high in pectin, a type of carbohydrate that acts as a thickener when cooked. Combined with a modest 2 tablespoons of tapioca, the apple thickened the filling to a soft, even consistency that was neither gelatinous nor slippery. The crust posed a much simpler challenge. As with all of our fruit pies, baking on a preheated baking sheet on the bottom oven rack produced a crisp, golden bottom crust. And we found a fast, easy alternative to a lattice top in a small biscuit cutter, which we used to cut out circles in the top crust before transferring the dough onto the pie. The attractive, unusual-looking top crust vented the steam from the berries as successfully as a classic lattice top.

Serves 8

Total time:

We developed this recipe with fresh blueberries, but you can use unthawed frozen berries, too. In step 4, cook half of the frozen berries over medium-high heat, without mashing, until reduced to 1 1/4 cups. 12 to 15 minutes. If you use pearl tapioca, use just 5 teaspoons. Vodka is essential to the texture of the crust and imparts no flavor; do not substitute.

INGREDIENTS

Foolproof Pie Dough

- 2 1/2** cups (12 1/2 ounces) all-purpose flour
- 2** tablespoons sugar
- 1** teaspoon salt
- 12** tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 1/4-inch-thick slices and chilled
- 8** tablespoons vegetable shortening, cut into 4 pieces and chilled
- 1/4** cup vodka, chilled
- 1/4** cup cold water

Blueberry Filling

- 2** tablespoons instant tapioca
- 30** ounces (6 cups) blueberries
- 1** Granny Smith apple, peeled and grated on large holes of box grater
- 2** teaspoons grated zest plus 2 teaspoons juice
- 3/4** cup (5 1/4 ounces) sugar
- Pinch salt
- 2** tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 1/4-inch pieces
- 1** large egg, lightly beaten with 1 teaspoon water

INSTRUCTIONS

1. FOR THE FOOLPROOF PIE DOUGH: Process 1 1/2 cups flour, sugar, and salt in food processor until combined, about 2 pulses. Add butter and shortening and process until homogeneous dough just starts to collect in uneven clumps, about 15 seconds, scraping down bowl as needed; dough will resemble cottage cheese curds and there should be no uncoated flour. Add remaining 1 cup flour and pulse until mixture is evenly distributed around bowl and mass of dough has been broken up, 4 to 6 pulses. Empty mixture into medium bowl.

2. Sprinkle vodka and water over mixture. With rubber spatula, use folding motion to mix, pressing down on dough until dough is slightly tacky and sticks together. Divide dough into 2 even balls and flatten each into 4-inch disk. Wrap each in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 45 minutes or up to 2 days.

3. Remove 1 dough disk from refrigerator and roll out on generously floured (up to ¼ cup) counter to 12-inch circle, about ⅛ inch thick. Roll dough loosely around rolling pin and unroll into 9-inch pie plate, leaving at least 1-inch overhang on each side. Working around circumference, ease dough into plate by gently lifting edge of dough with one hand while pressing into plate bottom with other hand. Leave dough that overhangs plate in place; refrigerate while preparing filling until dough is firm, about 30 minutes.

4. FOR THE BLUEBERRY FILLING: Adjust oven rack to lowest position, place rimmed baking sheet on oven rack, and heat oven to 400 degrees. Grind tapioca to powder in spice grinder. Place 3 cups berries in medium saucepan over medium heat. Using potato masher, mash berries several times to release juices. Continue to cook, stirring frequently and mashing occasionally, until about half of berries have broken down and mixture is thickened and reduced to 1½ cups, about 8 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool slightly.

5. Place grated apple in clean kitchen towel and wring dry. Transfer apple to large bowl. Add cooked berries, remaining 3 cups uncooked berries, lemon zest and juice, sugar, tapioca, and salt; toss to combine. Pour filling into dough-lined pie plate and scatter with butter pieces.

6. Roll out second dough disk on generously floured (up to ¼ cup) counter to 11-inch circle, about ⅛ inch thick. Using 1¼-inch round biscuit cutter, cut round from center of dough. Cut another 6 rounds from dough, each 1½ inches from edge of center hole and equally spaced around center hole. Roll dough loosely around rolling pin and unroll over pie, leaving at least ½-inch overhang on each side.

7. Using kitchen shears, trim overhanging dough to ½ inch. Fold dough under itself so that edge of fold is flush with outer rim of pie plate. Flute edges using thumb and forefinger or press with tines of fork to seal. Brush top and edges of pie with egg mixture. If dough is very soft, chill pie in freezer for 10 minutes.

8. Place pie on heated baking sheet and bake for 30 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees and continue to bake until juices bubble and crust is deep golden brown, 30 to 40 minutes longer. Transfer pie to wire rack; cool to room temperature, at least 4 hours. Cut into wedges and serve.

TWELVE STEPS TO PERFECT PIE CRUST

1. PROCESS DRY INGREDIENTS

Process sugar, salt, and 1½ cups of flour until combined.

WHY? So the dry base is well mixed before you add the fat.



2. ADD FAT

Add butter and shortening and process until the dough just starts to collect in uneven clumps; it will look like cottage cheese curds.

WHY? The processor incorporates the fats quickly, keeping them chilled.



3. ADD REST OF FLOUR

Add the remaining 1 cup of flour and pulse to distribute the mixture around the bowl and break up the dough. Empty the mix into a bowl.

WHY? Adding the flour in two steps makes for more even incorporation.



4. ADD LIQUIDS

Sprinkle the mixture with cold vodka and water.

WHY? To moisten the dough so it can coalesce without forming too much gluten. Because the liquids are chilled, the butter stays cold, which makes for a flaky crust.



5. MIX

Use a rubber spatula to mix in a folding motion, pressing down until the dough is tacky and sticks together.

WHY? You can mix this unusual dough with a heavy hand without compromising its texture, so mix away to incorporate thoroughly.

**6. DIVIDE DOUGH**

Separate the dough into two equal balls and flatten each into a 4-inch disk. Wrap each in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 45 minutes.

WHY? The disks give you an easy starting point for rolling rounds. Chilling the disks makes them easier to roll.

**7. ROLL BOTTOM CRUST**

Generously flour the work surface and then roll out one disk to a 12-inch circle that's 1/8 inch thick.

WHY? Use plenty of flour because this is a sticky dough.

**8. TRANSFER TO PIE PLATE**

Roll the dough up on the rolling pin and unroll it into a pie plate, gently fitting the dough to the plate. Leave an overhang and refrigerate. Fill the pie.

WHY? The pin supports the dough so it won't stretch or rip.

**9. ROLL & VENT TOP CRUST**

Roll the second disk to a slightly smaller circle. Make vent holes and place the dough over the filled pie, leaving a 1/2-inch overhang.

WHY? The vents allow the fruit's moisture to evaporate so the crusts stay crisp.

**10. TRIM CRUST**

Use shears to trim the overhang to 1/2 inch.

WHY? This will give you the right amount of dough to finish the edge. Otherwise the edge will be bulky and doughy.

**11. FOLD AND SEAL**

With the top and bottom crust together, fold the dough under itself so the edge of the fold is flush with the outer rim of the plate. Flute edges or use a fork to crimp and seal.

WHY? So the filling won't leak out.



12. BAKE ON HOT SHEET

Brush the crust with a mixture of egg and water and bake it on a preheated sheet.

WHY? The egg wash makes for a shiny, golden top crust. The preheated sheet helps brown the bottom crust.



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