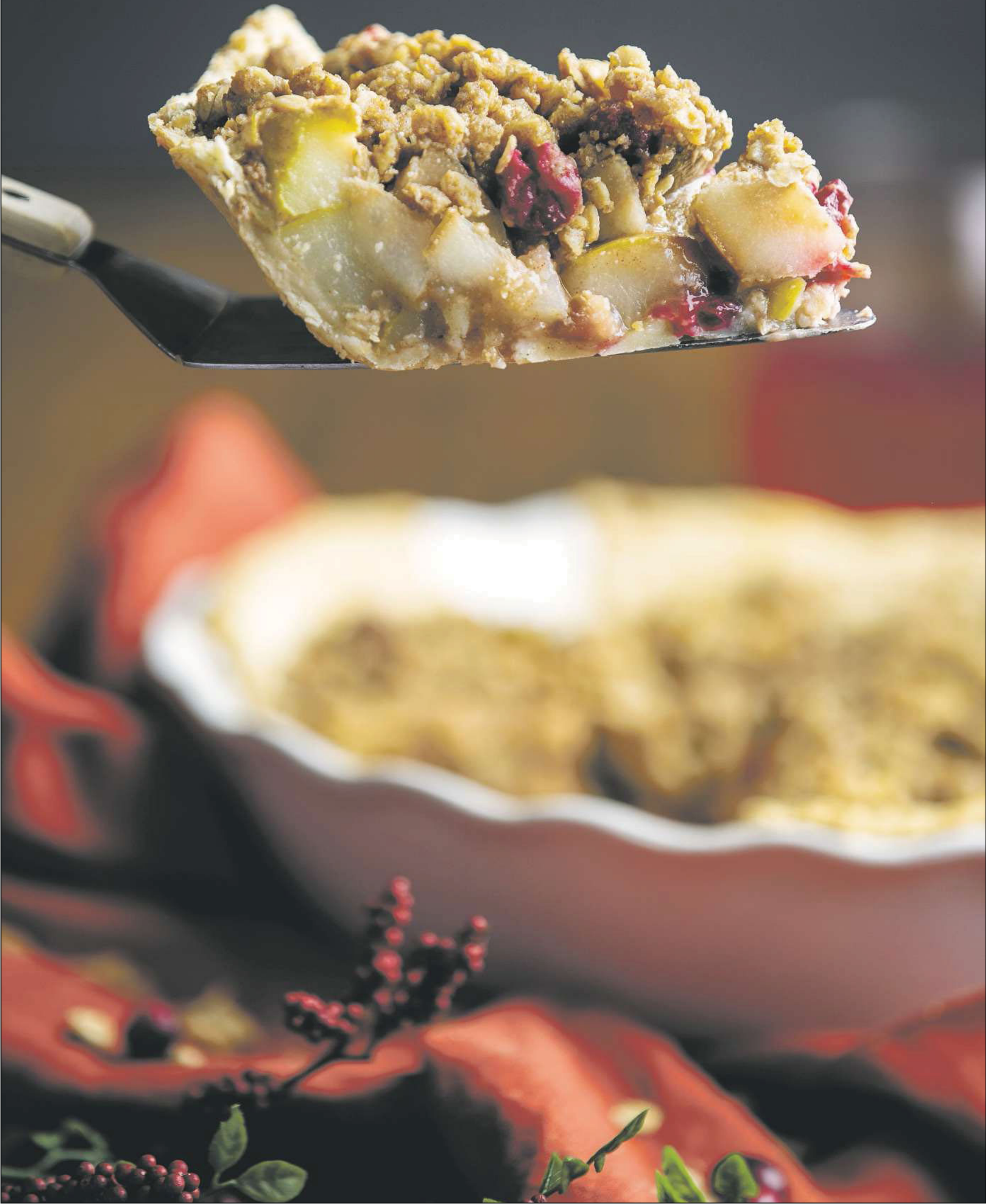


THE MIX

THE HOLIDAYS
ARE HERE AGAIN!

Seattle holiday traditions, E3 | Must-see theater, films, concerts, E4-5 | Return of “Nutcracker,” E6 | Pie, pie and more pie, E7-14 | Thanksgiving takeout, E15



AMANDA SNYDER / THE SEATTLE TIMES

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'TIS THE SEASON FOR PIE

The holidays are a time for family, friends, faith, music, lights, gifts, good tidings. But forget all that other stuff. The real reason for the season? Pie. Read on for Seattle's favorite type of pie — it won't shock you — a taste test of Seattle-area bakeries, pie recipes for bakers of all skill levels, plus thoughts on pandemic pies and every bakery's busiest season. Dig in!

HOLIDAY PIES



PHOTOS BY AMANDA SNYDER / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Using guidance given by our readers, The Seattle Times rounded up apple pies from 10 Seattle-area bakeries to find out which spot has the best take on the classic American dessert.



Our food writers picked three favorite apple pies from their Seattle-based blind taste test, pictured from left to right: A la Mode Pies, Pie Bird Bakeshop, Snohomish Pie Co.

Seattle loves apple pie. Here are 10 great slices in town

By JADE YAMAZAKI STEWART AND JACKIE VARRIANO, Seattle Times staff reporters

In October, with the holiday season right around the corner, we set out on a quest to discover the Seattle area’s favorite fall flavor and asked readers of The Seattle Times for their favorite pie flavors and places to get them.

Apple pie, made with Washington state’s most bountiful fruit, won with nearly 17% of votes. Runners-up included other classic pie flavors like pumpkin, strawberry rhubarb and coconut cream. Among all the pie votes, the local shops we saw mentioned most frequently as the places people love to get pie included A la Mode Pies, with locations in West Seattle, Ballard and Phinney Ridge; Pie Bird Bakeshop, which pops up at farmers markets; the Snohomish Pie Co. in Snohomish and Mountlake Terrace; Pie Bar, with three food trucks and locations in Ballard and Phinney Ridge; and Whidbey Pies, available at your local PCC and Metropolitan Market.

Then the question became: “Where can one get the best apple pie in the Seattle area?” To find out, we leaned on your helpful suggestions, incorporated some of our own, and rounded up 10 apple pies from all over the city and its outskirts — from pie shops like A la Mode to pies readily available in grocery stores and diners.

Then, the best part — we gathered six Seattle Times staffers together to blind-taste them all in one sitting to see if we could find a clear winner.

Scores were given based on our determination of what makes the

perfect pie:

- A flaky crust
- Great flavor
- Satisfying texture of the apples in the filling
- A pleasing appearance

Judges scored every pie on a points scale that was equally weighted in each of the four categories described above.

When we compared notes — our stomachs bursting with apples, sugar and crust — we discovered that what makes a good pie is deeply subjective.

Jackie Varriano likes her pie with soft, peeled apples — “peeled” is key, says Varriano! — while Jade Yamazaki Stewart likes them with more structure and doesn’t mind apple chunks with the skin on. Still, we had similar ideas when it came to front-runners, and once we combined our scores, three pies rose above the rest.

So, the winners of The Great Apple Pie Taste Test are ...

A la Mode and **Snohomish Pie Co.**, tied for first place, each with a composite score of 25! The apple pie from **Pie Bird Bakeshop** came in third, our judges agreed, with a score of 24. Tasting 10 pies side by side, it quickly became clear that to

stand out, the pie had to give us something beyond apples and sugar. Each of our three winners offered something special.

We loved how the top crust on Snohomish Pie Co.’s pie seemed to ripple gently atop a copious amount of apples. It was golden-brown and perfectly crimped — with just a few spots of sugary filling oozing through. The texture of the apples in the bake was smooth and rich without being mushy, the flavor had true notes of apple mixed in with spices. The crust wasn’t the most flavorful — but its flakiness and the sturdy, yet tender, bottom was one to be reckoned with.

A la Mode’s pie was the only French apple in the bunch (their other apple pie is an apple-pear, and the inclusion of the pear disqualified it from our apple tasting), meaning it had a streusel topping instead of a traditional crust. That crumbly topping lent a sugary, crunchy texture that juxtaposed wonderfully with the deep, apple-forward flavor of the pie. That apple flavor was a reoccurring theme in our winning pies. A la Mode uses Granny Smith apples, which lend a tart, bright flavor. They were also irregularly cut, giving the pie a mix of tender and crunchy apple bites, which proved essential.

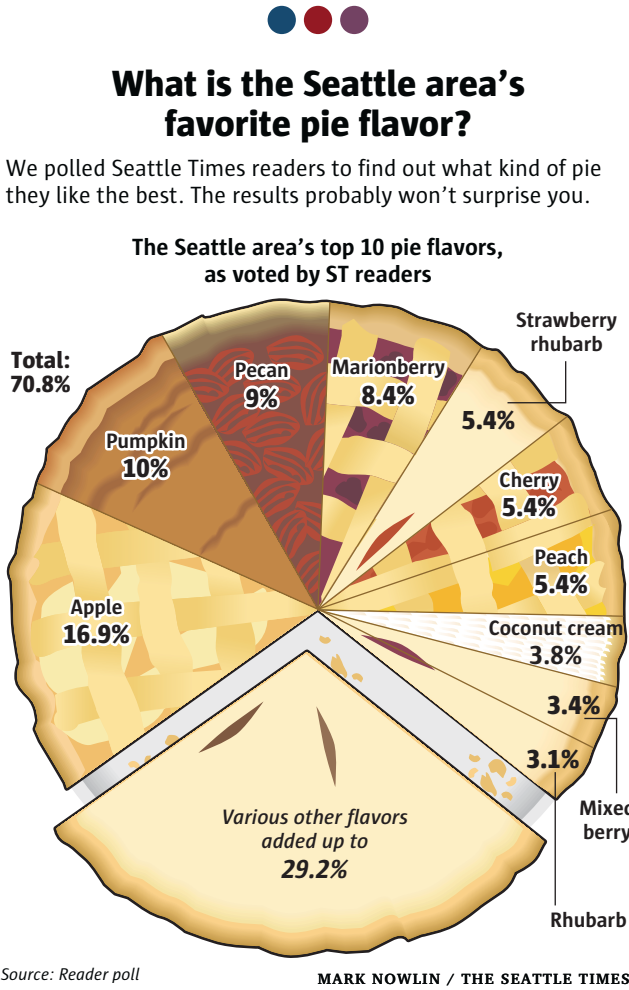
Pie Bird was Stewart’s favorite pie hands down. Made with Pink Lady apples from Collins Family Orchards in Yakima County, this pie had the deepest, most complex apple flavor of them all — not just sweet (like Gala or Fuji apples) or singularly bright and sharp (like Granny Smiths), the Pink Lady apple filling offered a balance of sugar and acidity, with floral apple

notes. The crust had a rich butter flavor, maybe from the use of higher-fat European butter. And it flaked easily, without being overly hard or disintegrating once cut.

Ultimately, while we were able to reach a consensus on the three very best pies, the exercise showed us that everyone has slightly different pie preferences and slightly

different ideas about what constitutes the perfect slice of apple pie. So if you’re looking for your perfect version of an apple pie, read our full notes below to find a pie that speaks to you — be it full of spice, unpeeled apples or massive proportions.

Continued on next page >



HOLIDAY PIES

RANKING THE BEST PIES FROM
OUR BLIND APPLE PIE TASTE TEST



The Top 3



Snohomish Pie Co.

Check snohomishpieco.com for updated holiday hours; locations in Snohomish and Mountlake Terrace; \$26.99 for an apple pie

Jackie: I think, when it came to appearance, the apple pie from Snohomish Pie Co. was by far the prettiest pie we had. However, I wanted a bit more butter — or even a hit of salt in that top crust. Still, it held together beautifully. The apples inside were of the soft texture I like; my only wish was for more cinnamon.

Jade I also thought this pie was gorgeous, with a puffed-up golden-brown crust and just enough oozes of caramelized sugar and apple juice to make you hungry for what’s inside. The apples could have been a little tangier and with more bite, but it was still one of my favorite pies from the tasting.



A la Mode Pies

Hours vary based on location; locations in Ballard, Phinney and West Seattle; alamodeseattle.com; \$35 for a French apple pie

Jackie: The crumble topping was a wild card which I welcomed, texturewise. I loved the real apple flavor in this one, and I loved how the apples were cut differently, giving each bite an interesting texture contrast of smooth and crunchy apples. Plus, it didn’t just hit you over the head with sugar, which I always appreciate.

Jade: Like Jackie, I’m a big fan of crumble toppings and the little bits of crunch they add to a good flaky bottom crust and fruit pie filling. I also appreciated the conservative use of sugar in the filling. Too much sugar obscures the flavor of good fruit and makes me think something sinister is hiding below that innocent-looking crust.



Pie Bird Bakeshop

Slices and whole pies are available at the University District Farmers Market every Saturday; Thanksgiving whole pie orders are also available for pickup on Nov. 24; piebirdbakeshop.com; \$35 for a classic apple pie

Jade: Pie Bird’s apple pie was my favorite. The apples had a nice tanginess and a complex apple flavor, both things that are crucial for a good apple pie that were missing in many of the other options we tried. It’s an apple pie, for God’s sake. You can’t just use any run-of-the-mill apple. The crust, too, kept flakiness a priority while finding the perfect balance between crunch and tenderness.

Jackie: Give me the butter, baby! This pie was the only one to truly tick that box for me when it came to crust. All that butter gave it a nice flake and it was truly perfectly done; not dry but also not at all smoochy on the bottom. I also appreciated the true apple flavor.



All the rest, in alphabetical order



Costco

10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. daily; over a dozen locations in the Seattle area; costco.com; \$12.99 for an apple pie

Jade: What Costco’s pie lacks in flavor, it makes up for in size. The hulking pile of apple, sugar and dough could easily feed 12 people, and made the other pies we ordered cower in fear from the sheer mass of their brawny cousin from the corporate grocery store. But don’t expect a lot of apple flavor in the filling or butter flavor in the crust. The amount of sugar in the pie made it super sweet, and not much else.

Jackie: I agree with Jade — Costco is the place to go if you’re feeding a crowd on Thanksgiving. Weighing in at nearly 5 pounds, this behemoth is the sugar bomb of a big family’s dreams. Make sure you’ve got plenty of black coffee on hand to offset the sweetness.



Grand Central Bakery

8 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily; locations in Wallingford, Wedgwood, Eastlake and Burien; whole frozen pies available with a preorder — call a couple of hours ahead to have them baked for you; grandcentralbakery.com; \$22.20 for a frozen apple pie

Jackie: As a whole, this was actually my favorite pie, but out of our group of testers, I was alone in this declaration! It was the only take-and-bake style, and I found the crust sturdy but flavorful — maybe I should be thanking Jade for his baking skills since he finished off the bake before serving it to us? Regardless, I loved how small the apples were cut. They were soft and rich, and the filling was the darkest of all, filled with spices, another big bonus for me.

Jade: For \$22.20, this was one of the better value pies in the roundup. I liked the firm crust, achieved partially by leaving the pie in the oven for an extra few minutes, but the pie lost some points for the mushiness of the apples.



Hillcrest Bakery

6 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Saturday; 10010 Main St., Bothell; hillcrestbakery.com; \$15.20 for an apple pie

Jackie: The appearance of this was classic pie with a golden-brown crust. When I think of diner pie — this one fits the bill perfectly. Thick-cut spears of apple that remained slightly crunchy, and a strong, applesauce-like flavor that is sugar-heavy, without much else when it came to flavor.

Jade: As somebody who values apple flavor beyond everything else in an apple pie, I couldn’t get past the lack of fruit flavor in this pie. The crunchiness of the apples also bothered me. I like some texture in an apple pie filling, but don’t want to hear the apple slices snapping between my teeth. The crust didn’t add a lot of flavor.



Huckleberry Square

6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily; 14423 Ambaum Blvd S.W., Burien; huckleberrysquare.com; \$11.99 for an apple pie

Jackie: Unfortunately, Huckleberry Square’s pie suffered from a soggy bottom, which was a shame as the top crust was quite light. The apples were crunchy, large spears. I almost wonder — with the soggy crust and crunch on the apple — whether this pie might’ve benefited for a few more minutes in the oven. Still, it was incredibly sweet, a perfect accompaniment to a cup of coffee.

Jade: Like Jackie, I thought the top crust of this pie was one of the flakier, more buttery choices out of the roundup. But the amount of sugar in the filling overpowered any apple flavor that may have existed before it died a syrupy death. If sweetness is what you like in your pie, though, I won’t judge. We should all be able to enjoy pie the way we see fit.



Pie Bar

Hours vary based on location; locations in Ballard and on Phinney Ridge; piebar.com; \$38 for an apple crumble

Jade: Pie Bar’s enormous apple crumble is a hard pie to share — it drooped and disintegrated once cut. The filling’s flavors were unusual, with boozy notes that could be off-putting to some people — a couple of our testers commented that the bourbon flavor was overpowering! — but I didn’t mind. And the flavors felt on-brand for a business that serves cocktails with its slices, promoting drunk-eating pie (a noble cause, if there ever was one).

Jackie: Any way you slice it, I hate an unpeeled apple in my pie. However, I can see why it’s done — the peel lends a lot of texture that goes beyond just crunch in an apple that some might welcome. Plus, those boozy notes gave it an interesting depth that helped showcase the spice.



Shari’s Café and Pies

Hours vary based on location; about a dozen locations in the Seattle area; \$14.99 for a deep-dish apple pie

Jade: Shari’s apple pie was one of the prettier ones in the roundup, with granulated sugar adding little sparkles to the top crust. But the super-sweet, syrupy filling was hard to stomach after a couple of bites — as Jackie said, these diner pies should probably always be served with a cup of coffee to cut the sweetness and cleanse the palate between bites.

Jackie: Again, Shari’s delivers in the way only a classic diner pie can. It’s got a perfectly serviceable crust pumped full with uniform, huge apple chunks. It’s wonderfully mundane — you know what each bite will offer you and it definitely is going to satisfy your sweet tooth.



Whidbey Pies

Available baked or frozen at groceries and markets around the Puget Sound area; find a list of retailers online at whidbeypies.com; \$19.99 for a Granny apple pie at Metropolitan Market

Jade: For a pie that can be found at grocery stores like Whole Foods, I was pretty impressed with the quality of this pie. The crust was flaky and buttery with some toasty flavors, which pair nicely with the flavor of apple and can make an apple pie taste even more like fall. The filling had decent fruit flavor, too, but was a bit on the mushy side of what I was looking for.

Jackie: Toasty is the perfect description for the crust on this pie. Again, it came to personal preference in that I enjoyed the small dice on the apple and the softness of it. However, I needed more spice and less sugar.



PIECING TOGETHER THE PERFECT HOLIDAY PIE

By TAYLOR BLATCHFORD
Seattle Times engagement editor
Photos by AMANDA SNYDER
Seattle Times staff photographer

PIE HAS ALWAYS INTIMIDATED ME. I've enjoyed baking for years, but the mouthwatering pies my stepmom made for our holiday desserts always seemed too daunting: the flaky golden crust, the juicy-but-not-mushy filling, the lattice designs with fruit peeking out below. I stuck to cookies, brownies, cupcakes, but not pie. That changed when the pandemic hit Washington state hard. I made my first homemade pie crust in March 2020, the week The Seattle Times started working from home. I suddenly had extra time to

fill, without commuting or going out with friends or doing much at all besides taking walks around my Phinney Ridge neighborhood. Pi Day was coming up, and I wanted a project to distract from the stress and fear of the spreading pandemic. I settled on a salted caramel apple pie with a homemade butter crust. Following an online tutorial, I figured out how to make a presentable lattice design for the top, and just like that, I'd successfully done it: a pie crust from scratch.

I took a few forays into focaccia and cake, but pie was what stuck. In those anxious times two springs ago, when everything seemed out of our control, I found comfort in the tactile process of rolling out crust, mixing up filling and assembling it all. It wasn't as tricky as I'd thought; it just took some time and patience. During Seattle's stay-home order, I made the apple pie, a lemon one and a mixed-berry variety. Over time, I got better at rolling out an even crust and baking it so it would be golden-brown but not burned. I

even started experimenting with my own adaptations and fillings, which led to the pie recipes you see here. Making pies also became a way to mark special occasions that looked different during the pandemic. The dessert is practically synonymous with American holiday celebrations, from Thanksgiving to the Fourth of July, and I embraced that in 2020. I didn't visit my family in Colorado for the holidays last year, and within the sadness of separation, there was room for new traditions. A peach pie brought summer fla-

vor to a backyard Fourth of July gathering. For a tiny Thanksgiving with my roommates, I made a caramel pear pie. Now that my social group is vaccinated, I've been able to share pie with more people (I made three for my birthday this fall). I'll be able to make pie for Thanksgiving with my family this year, and I won't take that for granted. I've been at this for more than a year now, but remember, I'm still an amateur home baker. I'm still learning and making plenty of mistakes — just ask the photo and

video journalists who documented the following recipes. But take my advice from a year and a half of pandemic pie-making: Don't be intimidated. Enjoy the process. To show that anyone of any culinary ability level can make a pie, we've come up with these three pies of varying difficulty levels. Whether you have years of pie experience or are just beginning, try one of the following recipes to share with others over your Thanksgiving table this fall.

Ah, pie. Perhaps it will never wrestle the Thanksgiving limelight away from the mighty turkey, but pies of all flavors — apple, pumpkin, pecan — go hand in hand with the holiday season. Read on for three great recipes.

Continued on next page >

HOLIDAY PIES

< Continued from previous page

BEGINNER

Lemon pie

This tangy, creamy lemon pie only uses seven ingredients and doesn’t require making a traditional pie crust. Instead, it uses a straightforward graham cracker crust.

Adapted from Live Well Bake Often

EQUIPMENT

9-inch pie pan, oven, measuring cups, mixing bowls, whisk

INGREDIENTS

Graham cracker crust

- 1 ½ cups graham cracker crumbs (about 11 sheets of graham crackers)
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter

Lemon filling:

- 1 cup lemon juice (if juicing fresh lemons, you’ll need about 6 large lemons)
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- Two 14-ounce cans of sweetened condensed milk
- 5 egg yolks

Optional topping:

- Whipped cream
- Lemon slices or lemon zest

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F.
2. **Make the graham cracker crust.** Melt the butter in the microwave or on the stove top. In a medium mixing bowl, combine graham cracker crumbs and sugar and mix until well combined. Add the melted butter and stir until the crumbs are moist.
3. In a 9-inch pie pan, spread the graham cracker mixture. Firmly press it into an even layer on the bottom and sides of the pan. (Using wax paper or parchment paper to press will keep the crumbs from sticking to your hands.)

4. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes. The crust should be a light golden-brown. Remove from the oven and set it aside to cool for 10 minutes. Keep your oven heated to 350 F.
5. **Make the lemon filling.** In a large mixing bowl, combine the lemon juice, lemon zest, sweetened condensed milk and egg yolks. Whisk until fully combined; mixture will be thick and creamy.
6. Pour the filling into the graham cracker crust and spread into an even layer.
7. **Bake the pie** for 18 to 22 minutes. The top should be mostly set, but will still be a bit jiggly.
8. Remove the pie from the oven and set it on a heatproof surface. Let it cool to room temperature for about 2 hours, then cover with aluminum foil or plastic wrap (make sure the foil/wrap isn’t touching the top of the pie). Transfer to the refrigerator to chill for 5-6 hours or overnight.
9. Serve chilled. (Optional: Top with whipped cream, lemon slices or lemon zest.) Store leftovers in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

TIPS

Make sure to plan ahead and allow time for the pie to chill in the refrigerator. This is a great recipe to make the day before your holiday celebration.

ADAPTATIONS

Make this recipe gluten-free by substituting gluten-free graham crackers in the crust.



This lemon pie with graham cracker crust, adapted from Live Well Bake Often, is recommended for beginners. Be sure to plan ahead and allow time for the pie to chill in the refrigerator.



The filling for this lemon pie with graham cracker crust is whisked until it thickens.



You’ll need to separate egg yolks from whites to make the lemon filling for this pie.

INTERMEDIATE

Cranberry-pear pie with crumble topping

This recipe uses a homemade pie crust but is topped with a crumble topping, so it doesn’t require a fancy lattice crust. Cranberry and pear make a tasty fall combination.

Adapted from Sally’s Baking Addiction

EQUIPMENT

9-inch pie pan, oven, measuring cups, mixing bowls, rolling pin, vegetable peeler, something to mix your pie crust with (food processor, high-powered blender or pastry cutter)

INGREDIENTS

Butter pie crust:

- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon of either white vinegar or vodka (it helps make the crust lighter/flakier)
- ½ cup ice water
- ½ teaspoon salt

Cranberry-pear filling:

- 6 cups ripe pears, cut into half-inch chunks (about 5 pears)
- 1 cup fresh or frozen cranberries
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice

Crumble topping:

- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter

- ½ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup rolled oats
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

DIRECTIONS:

For the crust:

If you’ve never made a homemade pie crust, it doesn’t have to be intimidating. Using a food processor will make the process faster, but you can also make the crust by hand. This recipe makes two crusts: one for the top of a pie and one for the bottom. You’ll only use one for the cranberry-pear pie; put the other half in the freezer and save it for a future pie.

1. Cut your sticks of butter into small cubes roughly half an inch wide. Put them in the freezer.
2. Add either white vinegar or vodka to ice water. Put the mixture in the freezer.
3. In a large mixing bowl, combine flour and salt. Mix until combined.
4. **If using a food processor or blender:** Pour flour and salt into the bowl of the food processor. Add the chilled butter. Pulse 10-15 times with short pulses; the dough

should look like coarse crumbs.

5. Add half of your chilled water mixture and pulse 10 more times. Test the consistency of the dough: It should be moist enough to stick together when you pinch it, but it shouldn’t be wet. If it’s still dry and crumbly, add a tablespoon of the water mixture and pulse 5 more times; continue until the dough is moist but not sticky.

6. **If mixing by hand:** Add chilled butter to the bowl with the flour/salt mixture; use a pastry cutter to work the butter in. There will be pea-sized chunks of butter, and that’s OK;

they’ll make your crust flaky.

7. Add half of your chilled water mixture and combine gently with a fork. Test the consistency of the dough: It should be moist enough to stick together when you pinch it, but it shouldn’t be wet. If it’s still dry and crumbly, add a tablespoon of the water mixture and mix; continue until dough is moist but not sticky.
8. Once dough is mixed, turn it out into a large piece of plastic wrap and form it into a large ball. Divide the ball in half and form 2 fat discs.
9. Wrap each disc in plastic wrap and chill in the refrigerator. You can also freeze the dough if saving for future use.

For the pie:

1. After the crust has chilled for at least an hour, pull it out of the refrigerator. Put the pie pan in the refrigerator. Preheat the oven to 350 F.
2. **Make the cranberry-pear filling.** In a large bowl, combine the pear chunks, cranberries, granulated sugar, flour, cinnamon, ginger and lemon juice. Stir with a large spoon or spatula until well combined.
3. **Make the crumble topping.**

Melt the butter in the microwave or on the stove top. In a medium bowl, combine the brown sugar, rolled oats, flour and cinnamon. Gently mix in melted butter until crumbles form and the mixture is moist.

4. Roll out your pie crust. The dough should be softer than it was in the refrigerator, but still cold. Sprinkle flour on your hands, rolling pin and work surface (I like rolling crust out on a silicone baking mat for easy cleanup). Turn the dough a quarter-turn every few rolls and make sure it’s not sticking to the counter. Roll until you have a rough circle that’s 12 inches in diameter.
5. Carefully place the rolled-out pie dough into the chilled pie pan. Gently press the center and edges into the pan and use a knife to trim off any dough hanging over the edge of the pan. Don’t stretch the dough, though, or it will shrink while baking. Chill the pan for 30 minutes.
6. Spoon the cranberry-pear filling into the crust in an even layer. Sprinkle crumble topping evenly over the filling.
7. **Bake the pie** for 55-60 minutes. The top should be lightly browned.
8. Remove the pie from the oven

Continued on next page >



Seattle Times engagement editor Taylor Blatchford found a passion for baking pies during the pandemic. Here, she works with the crust for the cranberry-pear pie described in this recipe.

HOLIDAY PIES

ADVANCED

Berry-ginger pie with spoke lattice crust

Ready to take your pie to the next level and wow your holiday gathering? It's time to use a beautiful spoke lattice technique created by Seattle's Lauren Ko, author of "Pieometry." Mixed berries will make this design pop, and a dash of fresh ginger adds holiday warmth.

Adapted from "Pieometry" by Lauren Ko (William Morrow Cookbooks, 2020, \$32.50)

EQUIPMENT

9-inch pie pan, oven, measuring cups, mixing bowls, rolling pin, ruler, pizza cutter, 2-inch circle cutter, something to mix your pie crust with (food processor, high-powered blender or pastry cutter)

INGREDIENTS

Butter pie crust:

- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon of either white vinegar or vodka (it helps make the crust lighter/flakier)
- ½ cup ice water
- ½ teaspoon salt

Berry-ginger filling:

- 6 cups fresh blackberries, raspberries, strawberries or blueberries (your choice on the berries and proportions; you just need 6 cups total)
- 2 teaspoons finely grated, peeled, fresh ginger
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Egg wash:

- 1 egg white
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar

DIRECTIONS:

For the crust:

See the butter pie crust recipe in the intermediate section

For the pie:

1. After the crust has chilled for at least an hour, pull it out of the refrigerator. Put the pie pan in the refrigerator.
2. **Make the berry-ginger filling.** If using strawberries, slice them into half-inch-thick pieces. In a medium bowl, combine berries, ginger, granulated sugar, flour, lemon juice and salt. Mix gently

without crushing the berries. Set aside ¼ cup of berries for later, and let the filling sit while you roll out the dough.

3. Roll out one of your pie crusts. The dough should be softer than it was in the refrigerator, but still cold. Sprinkle flour on your hands, rolling pin and work surface (I like rolling crust out on a silicone baking mat for easy cleanup). Turn the dough a quarter-turn every few rolls and make sure it's not sticking to the counter. Roll until you have a rough circle that's 12 inches in diameter.
4. Carefully place the rolled-out pie dough into the chilled pie pan. Gently press the center and edges into the pan and use a knife to trim off any crust hanging over the edge of the pan. Don't stretch the dough, though, or it will shrink while baking. Chill the pan for 30 minutes.
5. Roll out your second pie crust into a 11-by-15-inch rectangle. Using the ruler as a straight edge, cut the rectangle into at least 30 strips, all ½-inch wide and 11 inches long.

6. Pull the pie pan out of the refrigerator. Pour the filling into the crust in an even layer.
7. Place a 2-inch circle cutter in the center of the filling. Lightly dab water around the edge of the pie shell.
8. **Start your spoke lattice pattern (see step-by-step at right).** Gently pick up a strip of dough by the ends and lay it across the pie. The strip should touch the outside of the circle cutter. Lightly press the strip into the pie crust edges.
9. Repeat this process with a second dough strip, placing each edge a half-inch away from the previous strip.
10. Continue working your way around the pie, with strips evenly spaced out half an inch away from each other. The 30 strips should

take you all the way around the pie.

11. Gently press the edges of the strips into place. Use a knife to trim any excess dough hanging over the edges of the crust.
12. Remove the center circle cutter and fill the crater with the ¼ cup of reserved berries.
13. Preheat the oven to 425 F. Put the entire pie in the refrigerator while the oven is preheating.
14. **Prepare your egg wash.** In a small bowl, beat the egg white with a fork.
15. When the oven has preheated, loosely set a piece of aluminum foil over the pie with a fist-sized hole in the center. This will keep your pie crust from browning too quickly.
16. **Bake the pie** for 20 minutes at 425 F.
17. Turn the oven temperature down to 375 F and bake for another 20 minutes.
18. Open the oven, remove the pie and close the oven to keep the temperature stable. Remove the aluminum foil shield. Quickly brush the top of your pie with egg wash and sprinkle lightly with sugar.
19. Return the pie to the oven without the aluminum foil shield. Bake for another 20 minutes at 375 F (this will get you to 60 minutes total baking time).
20. When your pie is done, the filling

will be bubbling in the center and the crust will be golden-brown. Remove the pie from the oven and set it on a heatproof surface. Let it cool to room temperature for about 3 hours. Don't worry if the filling looks runny; it will thicken as it cools.

21. Serve pie at room temperature. (Optional: Top with vanilla ice cream.) Store leftovers in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

TIPS

Keeping all your ingredients chilled is key to a flaky pie dough. You should see small pieces of butter in your dough, and your butter should not melt. If your ingredients are getting warm as you mix, particularly if mixing by hand, stick them all in the freezer for 5 minutes and then continue.

Rolling out pie dough can be tricky: It needs to be cold enough that the butter doesn't melt, but soft enough to be pliable. If the dough is too hard or crumbles as you roll it out, let it sit at room temperature for 15 more minutes and try again. If the dough is too sticky or starts to feel greasy, put it in the refrigerator for 5 minutes.

ADAPTATIONS

For a gluten-free pie, make a gluten-

free crust (see below) and substitute a gluten-free flour in the filling. Gluten-free dough can be harder to make a lattice crust with; be patient and gently brush ice water on your dough if it gets too crumbly.

For gluten-free pie crust, use a 1-to-1 gluten-free baking flour, like Bob's Red Mill or King Arthur Flour. (Make sure your flour includes xanthan gum, which will help the dough stick together without gluten.)

Follow the same process to make your pie dough, but with these ingredients:

- 3 cups all-purpose gluten-free flour
- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter
- 1 egg, beaten and chilled
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder

Add the egg to the dough before you add the water, and add the baking powder to the flour/salt mixture. Otherwise, the process is exactly the same.

You can make your gluten-free pie dough a little more moist, because it will absorb more water as it chills. It's also helpful to use the dough soon after making it (after at least 30 minutes of refrigeration), or it will get hard and take longer to soften and roll out.



This berry-ginger pie with a spoke lattice crust, adapted from "Pieometry" by Seattle's own Lauren Ko, is not for the faint of heart. But oh my goodness is that one pretty piece of dessert.



This berry-ginger pie with a spoked crust is designed for skilled bakers who have the patience to make a pie that might just be too pretty to eat. Well, almost. Maybe not. (We ate it.)

Seattle Times pie expert Taylor Blatchford fills her pie crust with the berry mixture.



A berry-ginger pie with a lattice crust will put all other pies at your table to shame.



< Continued from previous page

and set it on a heatproof surface. Let it cool to room temperature for about 3 hours. Don't worry if the filling looks runny; it will thicken as it cools.

9. Serve pie at room temperature. (Optional: Top with vanilla ice cream.) Store leftovers in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

TIPS

Keeping all your ingredients chilled is key to a flaky pie dough. You should see small pieces of butter in your dough, and your butter should not melt. If your ingredients are getting warm as you mix, particularly if mixing by hand, stick them

all in the freezer for 5 minutes and then continue.

Rolling out pie dough can be tricky: It needs to be cold enough that the butter doesn't melt, but soft enough to be pliable. If the dough is too hard or crumbles as you roll it out, let it sit at room temperature for 15 more minutes and try again. If the dough is too sticky or starts to feel greasy, put it in the refrigerator for 5 minutes.

ADAPTATIONS

To make a gluten-free pie, make a gluten-free crust (see below) and substitute a gluten-free flour in the filling and crumble topping.

For gluten-free pie crust, use a

1-to-1 gluten-free baking flour, like Bob's Red Mill or King Arthur Flour. (Make sure your flour includes xanthan gum, which will help the dough stick together without gluten.)

Follow the same process to make your pie dough, but with these ingredients:

- 3 cups all-purpose gluten-free flour
- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter
- ¾ cup ice water
- 1 egg, beaten and chilled
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder

Add the egg to the dough before you add the water, and add the baking powder to the flour/salt

mixture. Otherwise, the process is exactly the same.

You can make your gluten-free pie dough a little more moist, because it will absorb more water as it

chills. It's also helpful to use the dough soon after making it (after at least 30 minutes of refrigeration), or it will get hard and take longer to soften and roll out.



Into the pie crust go pears, cranberries and more for this crumble-topped pie.

HOLIDAY PIES



Chris Porter is the owner of A la Mode Pies, a small bakery chain with three Greater Seattle locations. Porter is pictured Nov. 10 at his Ballard shop. On his first Thanksgiving, Porter says he had orders for 30 pies. This year, Porter and his team will churn out 2,500 pies in the 28-hour period before the holiday.

Why sell pies? To perfect the last bite of Thanksgiving dinner

By JACKIE VARRIANO, Seattle Times food writer

On Thanksgiving Day, chances are, after the turkey, stuffing and cranberry sauce are cleared away, the last bite of food you’re forking up is pie.

“The beauty of Thanksgiving is it doesn’t matter if you’re a cake person or a pie person, you’re having pie. I don’t know a single person who’s putting cupcakes down on the table,” Chris Porter, owner of A la Mode Pies, a pie shop with three locations in the Seattle area (and home to one of our top-three favorite Seattle-area apple pies), said during a recent phone interview.

Porter says pie is the go-to dessert on more holidays than any other; Christmas, birthdays, Father’s Day, Fourth of July and Pi Day. Seattle’s appetite for pie is enough to sustain multiple pie shops and pop-ups, not to mention pie sold at diners, larger bakeries, grocery stores and more.

When asked if Seattle’s appetite for pie was insatiable, Porter answered with an emphatic “yes.”

The “why” boils down to tradition.

“Pie is so nostalgic, it takes you right back to being a kid at grandma’s house,” he says.

Porter got his start selling pies online in 2009 — he calls his business “Seattle’s first online bakery.” In 2011, he opened his first pie shop on Phinney Ridge, across from the Woodland Park Zoo. A West Seattle location followed in 2016, and a shop in Ballard just opened in October.

“I had never worked in a commercial kitchen before, and now we do over \$2 million worth of pie sales each year,” Porter says.

Porter and his team are gearing up to churn out a whopping 2,500 pies in the 28-hour period right before Thanksgiving, still rolling out

“Pie is so nostalgic, it takes you right back to being a kid at grandma’s house”

CHRIS PORTER
Owner of A la Mode Pies



each one by hand “like grandma used to do.”

On his first Thanksgiving, Porter says he had orders for

30 pies. “I thought I was killing it. To be at 2,500, to even be saying that number out loud, is incredible,” Porter says.

Each one of his pie shops has had its grand opening in October — incredibly important when it comes to gearing up for the holiday season.

“Thanksgiving is why we’re in business. It’s why you open a pie shop,” Porter says. He’s not alone.

“We’ve been in the community for 25 years. We have become a staple to people’s holidays, special events. We’re a part of people’s lives,” says Jenny Brien, owner of Snohomish Pie Co., a shop with locations in Snohomish and Mountlake Terrace.

Brien purchased Snohomish Pie Co., which has been open since 1996, in 2009, but had been helping at the shop during Thanksgiving rushes since 2002. The first Thanksgiving she helped, they made 215 pies. This year they are on track to make 5,200.

“And 215 took as many hours as it does for us to bake 5,000. It’s funny, you look back at that and it seemed like such a huge number,” Brien says.

Those 5,200 pies are all preordered — plus an extra 250 for walk-up orders the day before Thanksgiving. The line to get those pies starts forming at 5 a.m., and Brien says standing in that line has become the tradition for some families.

“This is people’s biggest holiday. We need to make sure our pie is on par for their table. Some people have had us on their table for decades,” Brien says.

In the years since Brien has taken over Snohomish Pie Co. she has grown the business from five employees to 27. Bakers work in shifts over 48-straight hours in the days leading up to Thanksgiving to churn out the 5,000 pies.

“It’s a full freight train at times. It’s on its track going full speed and you better just

watch out,” Brien says.

She’s occasionally shocked by the sight of all those Thanksgiving pies, boxed and ready to go, but overall, Brien says she feels overwhelmingly honored.

“I’m honored I get to own the Pie Company. It’s not about the pie, it’s about the people. There are stories being told at Thanksgiving; announcements, heartache, and we can be the consistent side of it,” Brien says.

Another major player in Seattle’s pie scene is Natalie Bleifuss, owner of Pie Bar, with three food trucks roaming the Eastside, plus locations in Ballard and on Phinney Ridge.

“We’re sugar and booze. That’s why we survived restaurant Armageddon,” Bleifuss says with a chuckle.

Bleifuss and her twin sister Alyssa opened the first Pie Bar on Capitol Hill in 2012. They have since separated their business ventures; Alyssa Bleifuss now runs Pie Wine Bar in Woodinville and Pie Bar Charlie in Fremont.

Natalie Bleifuss’ busiest day is Thanksgiving — with roughly 300 pies going out the door after 36 hours of baking.

“Pie is generational. It’s timeless. It meets everybody’s needs and makes them feel good,” Bleifuss says.

Bleifuss recently remodeled the bakery to turn out 200 pies an hour and says that after nearly a decade of making pie — some of which come from 100-year-old family recipes — she still loves the simplicity of it all.

“People try to make pie too complicated, but it’s one of the most simple things ever. The moment you eat it, you have memories,” Bleifuss says.

Jackie Varriano covers the food scene in the neighborhoods around Seattle. She loves digging into stories that discuss why we eat the things we do — and when — in our region and beyond. Reach her at jvarriano@seattletimes.com. On Twitter: @JackieVarriano.



Chris Porter of A la Mode Pies makes a pie at his Ballard shop Nov. 10. At “Seattle’s first online bakery,” as Porter calls it, they roll out each pie by hand “like grandma used to do.”