

Sweet Cherry Pie

From the episode: *All-American Fruit Desserts*

Makes one 9-inch pie serving 8

Vodka is essential to the texture of the crust and imparts no flavor—do not substitute. This dough will be moister and more supple than most standard pie dough and will require more flour to roll out (up to 1/4 cup). The tapioca should be measured first, then ground in a coffee grinder or food processor for 30 seconds. If you are using frozen fruit, measure it frozen, but let it thaw before making the filling; if you don't, you run the risk of partially cooked fruit and undissolved tapioca.

INGREDIENTS

PIE DOUGH

- 2 1/2** cups (12 1/2 ounces) unbleached all-purpose flour , plus more for work surface
- 1** teaspoon table salt
- 2** tablespoons sugar
- 12** tablespoons (1 1/2 sticks) cold unsalted butter , cut into 1/4-inch pieces
- 1/2** cup cold vegetable shortening , cut into 4 pieces
- 1/4** cup vodka , cold (see note)
- 1/4** cup cold water

CHERRY FILLING

- 2** red plums, halved and pitted
- 6** cups (about 2 pounds) pitted sweet cherries or 6 cups pitted frozen cherries, halved (see note)
- 1/2** cup sugar (3 1/2 ounces)
- 1/8** teaspoon table salt

- 1** tablespoon juice from 1 lemon
- 2** teaspoons bourbon (optional)
- 2** tablespoons instant tapioca, ground (see note)
- 1/8** teaspoon ground cinnamon (optional)
- 2** tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 1/4-inch pieces
- 1** large egg, lightly beaten with 1 teaspoon water

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **FOR THE PIE DOUGH:** Process 1½ cups flour, salt, and sugar in food processor until combined, about two 1-second pulses. Add butter and shortening; process until homogeneous dough just starts to collect in uneven clumps, about 15 seconds (dough will resemble cottage cheese curds and there should be no uncoated flour). Scrape bowl with rubber spatula and redistribute dough evenly around processor blade. 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 quick 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 equal balls and flatten each into 4-inch disk. Cover each with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 45 minutes or up to 2 days.

3. Remove 1 disk dough from refrigerator and roll out on generously floured (up to ¼ cup) work surface to 12-inch circle about 1/8 inch thick. Roll dough loosely around rolling pin and unroll into pie plate, leaving at least 1-inch overhang. Ease dough into plate by gently lifting edge of dough with 1 hand while pressing into plate bottom with other hand. Refrigerate until dough is firm, about 40 minutes.

4. **FOR THE FILLING:** Adjust oven rack to lowest position, place baking sheet on oven rack, and heat oven to 400 degrees. Process plums and 1 cup halved cherries in food processor until smooth, about 1 minute, scraping down sides of bowl as necessary. Strain puree through fine-mesh strainer into large bowl, pressing on solids to extract liquid; discard solids. Stir remaining halved cherries, sugar, salt, lemon juice, bourbon (if using), tapioca, and cinnamon (if using) into puree; let stand for 15 minutes.

5. Transfer cherry mixture, including all juices, to dough-lined plate. Scatter butter pieces over fruit. Roll second disk of dough on generously floured work surface (up to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup) to 11-inch circle about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick. Roll dough loosely around rolling pin and unroll over pie, leaving at least $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch overhang. Flute edges using thumb and forefinger or press with tines of fork to seal. Brush top and edges with egg mixture. With sharp knife, make 8 evenly spaced 1-inch-long vents in top crust. Freeze pie 20 minutes.

6. Place pie on preheated baking sheet and bake 30 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees and continue to bake until juices bubble around the edges and crust is deep golden brown, 30 to 40 minutes longer.

7. Transfer pie to wire rack; let cool to room temperature so juices have time to thicken, 2 to 3 hours. Cut into wedges and serve.

TECHNIQUE

KEYS TO JUICY, SWEET-TART CHERRY PIE

While some fruits (like blueberries) gush excess juice when baked into a pie, sweet cherries like Bing suffer the opposite problem: Their firm, meaty flesh holds on to juice and can lead to a too-dry filling.

1. HALVE CHERRIES

Halving the cherries exposes their dense, meaty flesh and helps them release more juice than if left whole.



2. GET PLUMMY

To add tartness and juiciness, puree 1 cup cherries with 2 plums. Strain, adding the liquid to the halved cherries and discarding the solids.



3. SKIP THE LATTICE

A traditional lattice crust allows too much moisture to evaporate during baking; a closed crust helps keep juices inside.



TECHNIQUE

CHERRY PICKIN'S

When you set out to make a cherry pie, there are three main options for the cherries.

SOUR

Fresh sour cherries are prized in pies, but they're rarely available in supermarkets.



JARRED

Sour Morello cherries in a jar can be hard to find, even through mail order.



SWEET

Fresh Bing cherries are more readily available, but their sweet, dense flesh is challenging.



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