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## Strawberry-Rhubarb Pie

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 16: Revolutionizing Classic Fruit Desserts

### WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

Sweet strawberries and tart rhubarb are a winning flavor combination, but they can turn into a soupy mess when baked unless you take steps to manage their high water content. In our recipe, we macerate the rhubarb and some of the strawberries with sugar to draw out their excess liquid; then we cook the resulting syrup down with the remaining strawberries to make a jam-like mixture that is folded back into the rhubarb. Because we have removed the excess water, we are able to use less thickener and more fruit than is used in most strawberry-rhubarb pies, which results in an intensely flavored filling that is chunky and softly gelled. To complement the tartness of the fruit, we top our double-crust pie with a generous amount of water and sugar, which bakes to a crackly finish.

### Serves 8

This dough is unusually moist and requires a full 1/4 cup of flour when rolling it out to prevent it from sticking. Rhubarb varies in the amount of trimming required. Buy 2 pounds to ensure that you end up with 7 cups of rhubarb pieces. (For tips on crimping the dough, see related content.) If desired, serve the pie with whipped cream or ice cream.

### INGREDIENTS

#### Crust

- 2 1/2** cups (12 1/2 ounces) all-purpose flour
- 2** tablespoons sugar, plus 3 tablespoons for sprinkling
- 1** teaspoon salt
- 12** tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 1/4-inch slices and chilled
- 1/2** cup vegetable shortening, cut into 4 pieces and chilled
- 1/4** cup vodka, chilled
- 1/4** cup cold water, plus extra for brushing

#### Filling

- 2** pounds rhubarb, trimmed and cut into 1/2-inch pieces (7 cups)
- 1 1/4** cups (8 3/4 ounces) sugar
- 1** pound strawberries, hulled, halved if less than 1 inch, quartered if more than 1 inch (3 to 4 cups)
- 3** tablespoons instant tapioca

### INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. FOR THE CRUST:** Process 1 1/2 cups flour, 2 tablespoons sugar, and salt in food processor until combined, about 5 seconds. Scatter butter and shortening over top and process until incorporated and mixture begins to form uneven clumps with no remaining floury bits, about 15 seconds.
- 2.** Scrape down sides of bowl and redistribute dough evenly around processor blade. Sprinkle remaining 1 cup flour over dough and

pulse until mixture has broken up into pieces and is evenly distributed around bowl, 4 to 6 pulses.

**3.** Transfer mixture to large bowl. Sprinkle vodka and cold water over mixture. Using rubber spatula, stir and press dough until it sticks together.

**4.** Divide dough in half. Turn each half onto sheet of plastic wrap and form into 4-inch disk. Wrap disks tightly in plastic and refrigerate for 1 hour. Let chilled dough sit on counter to soften slightly, about 10 minutes, before rolling. (Wrapped dough can be refrigerated for up to 2 days or frozen for up to 1 month. If frozen, let dough thaw completely on counter before rolling.)

**5. FOR THE FILLING:** While dough chills, combine rhubarb and sugar in bowl and microwave for 1 1/2 minutes. Stir and continue to microwave until sugar is mostly dissolved, about 1 minute longer. Stir in 1 cup strawberries and set aside for 30 minutes, stirring once halfway through.

**6.** Drain rhubarb mixture through fine-mesh strainer set over large saucepan. Return drained rhubarb mixture to bowl and set aside. Add remaining strawberries to rhubarb liquid and cook over medium-high heat until strawberries are very soft and mixture is reduced to 1 1/2 cups, about 10 to 15 minutes. Mash berries with fork (mixture does not have to be smooth). Add strawberry mixture and tapioca to drained rhubarb mixture and stir to combine. Set aside.

**7.** Roll 1 disk of dough into 12-inch circle on well-floured counter. Loosely roll dough around rolling pin and gently unroll onto 9-inch pie plate, letting excess dough hang over edge. Ease dough into plate by gently lifting edge of dough with your hand while pressing into plate bottom with your other hand. Wrap dough-lined plate loosely in plastic and refrigerate until dough is firm, about 30 minutes.

**8.** Roll other disk of dough into 12-inch circle on well-floured counter, then transfer to parchment paper-lined baking sheet; cover with plastic and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Adjust rack to middle position and heat oven to 425 degrees.

**9.** Transfer filling to chilled dough-lined plate and spread into even layer. Loosely roll remaining dough round around rolling pin and gently unroll it onto filling. Trim overhang to 1/2 inch beyond lip of plate. Pinch edges of top and bottom crusts firmly together. Tuck overhang under itself; folded edge should be flush with edge of plate. Crimp dough evenly around edge of plate using your fingers or butter knife. Brush surface thoroughly with extra water and sprinkle with 3 tablespoons sugar. Cut eight 2-inch slits in top crust.

**10.** Place pie on parchment-lined rimmed baking sheet and bake until crust is set and begins to brown, about 25 minutes. Rotate pie and reduce oven temperature to 375 degrees; continue to bake until crust is deep golden brown and filling is bubbling, 30 to 40 minutes longer. If edges of pie begin to get too brown before pie is done, cover loosely with aluminum foil. Let cool on wire rack for 2 1/2 hours before serving.

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## TECHNIQUE

### WHAT? RUN IT UNDER WATER?

It sounded crazy when my colleague (who got the trick from his mother) suggested I do it, but here's why sticking a pie under the tap before baking makes sense: It thoroughly moistens the dough so it can hold on to more sugar, which gets transformed into a candy-like layer in the oven. Ultimately, I opted for a safer (albeit less dramatic) method for the same result: I brushed the pastry thoroughly with water. Even this approach produced a crust that was able to grip a full 3 tablespoons of sugar.



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## TECHNIQUE

### THE RUNNIEST OF ALL PIES

Most fruit pies are runny by nature, but the strawberry-rhubarb kind is the worst. That's because the abundance of liquid in rhubarb



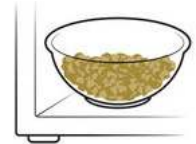
floods the pie during baking, and the berries soak up some of the juices and bloat. We devised specific treatments for each component, resulting in a filling that gels softly and tastes bright. We also fixed rhubarb's mushy texture.



**PROBLEM, MUSHY RHUBARB:** Rhubarb in pie fillings tends to “blow out” because its rigid structure can’t accommodate the expansion that occurs when the heat of the oven converts the stalk’s abundant moisture to steam. The result: pieces that have exploded rather than remained tender and intact.

**PROBLEM, BLOATED BERRIES:** Strawberries also soften during baking but remain intact because their structure is more flexible and better able to withstand expansion. In fact, strawberries in pie filling not only contain their own juices during baking but also soak up moisture thrown off by the rhubarb, which makes them unappealingly bloated.

**SOLUTION, MICROWAVE:** To rid the rhubarb of some water without cooking it too much, we toss the cut-up pieces with sugar (which helps draw out moisture) and briefly microwave them.



**SOLUTION, MACERATE; THEN DRAIN:** Resting the sugared rhubarb and some of the berries for 30 minutes draws out even more moisture that can then be drained off.



**SOLUTION, REDUCE:** We further minimize the juices but retain their flavor by reducing the shed liquid with the rest of the berries until the mixture turns jammy.



## TECHNIQUE

### TECHNIQUE: VENTING GUIDES

Cutting vents in a pie’s top crust allows steam to escape —important for juicy fruit pies like strawberry-rhubarb. By cutting eight evenly spaced slits in a spoke-like pattern, we also create slicing guidelines that help produce even portions.

