

Fresh Strawberry Pie

From the episode: *Sweet Summer Endings*

Makes one 9-inch pie, serving 8 to 10

To account for any imperfect strawberries, the ingredient list calls for several more ounces of berries than will be used in the pie. If possible, seek out ripe, farmers' market-quality berries. Make certain that you use Sure-Jell engineered for low- or no-sugar recipes (packaged in a pink box) and not regular Sure-Jell (in a yellow box); otherwise, the glaze will not set properly. The pie is at its best after two or three hours of chilling; as it continues to chill, the glaze becomes softer and wetter, though the pie will taste just as good.

INGREDIENTS

FILLING

- 4** pints fresh strawberries , gently rinsed and dried, hulled (see note)
- 3/4** cup (5 1/4 ounces) sugar
- 2** tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 1/2** teaspoons recipes (see note)
- Table salt
- 1** tablespoon juice from 1 lemon
- 1** recipe Baked Pie Shell (see related recipe)

WHIPPED CREAM

- 1** cup cold heavy cream
- 1** tablespoon sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **FOR THE FILLING:** Select 6 ounces misshapen, underripe, or otherwise unattractive berries, halving those that are large; you should have about 1½ cups. In food processor, process berries to smooth puree, 20 to 30 seconds, scraping down bowl as needed. You should have about ¾ cup puree.

2. Whisk sugar, cornstarch, Sure-Jell, and salt in medium saucepan. Stir in berry puree, making sure to scrape corners of pan. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring constantly with heatproof rubber spatula, and bring to full boil. Boil, scraping bottom and sides of pan to prevent scorching, for 2 minutes to ensure that cornstarch is fully cooked (mixture will appear frothy when it first reaches boil, then will darken and thicken with further cooking). Transfer to large bowl and stir in lemon juice. Let cool to room temperature.

3. Meanwhile, pick over remaining berries and measure out 2 pounds of most attractive ones; halve only extra-large berries. Add berries to bowl with glaze and fold gently with rubber spatula until berries are evenly coated. Scoop berries into pie shell, piling into mound. If any cut sides face up on top, turn them face down. If necessary, rearrange berries so that holes are filled and mound looks attractive. Refrigerate pie until chilled, about 2 hours. Serve within 5 hours of chilling.?

4. **FOR THE WHIPPED CREAM:** Just before serving, beat cream and sugar with electric mixer on low speed until small bubbles form, about 30 seconds. Increase speed to medium; continue beating until beaters leave trail, about 30 additional seconds. Increase speed to high; continue beating until cream is smooth, thick, and nearly doubled in volume and forms soft peaks, 30 to 60 seconds.

5. Cut pie into wedges. Serve with whipped cream.

TECHNIQUE

THROUGH THICK AND THIN

Most fresh strawberry pies fail because they're overloaded with thickeners that either gum up the filling or never manage to thicken it at all.

TOO STIFF

Thicken strawberry pie filling with gelatin and the result resembles Jell-O.



TOO RUNNY

Thicken strawberry pie filling with cornstarch and the result typically turns out gloppy, dull-tasting, and still not firm enough.



TECHNIQUE

DOUBLING UP TO THICKEN JUICY FRUIT

To create a filling with just enough sticking power to hold the berries together gently, we turned to a thickener more common in jam than pie - low-sugar pectin - and used it in combination with cornstarch. Both products work similarly: When combined with liquid, then heated and cooled, some of their molecules bond together, trapping water and creating a solid, jelly-like structure. But the strength and properties of the two structures differ. Amylose, one of two types of starch molecules in cornstarch, forms a weak structure that easily comes apart under the weight of heavy, juicy-filled strawberries.

Low-sugar pectin (which, unlike regular pectin, gels without added sugar and acid) contains bigger molecules that form a firmer structure held together more forcefully by calcium ions. Once created, this matrix resists coming apart.

When used independently, neither product resulted in a suitable pie filling, but together they yielded a glaze with just the right texture.

CORNSTARCH



LOW-SUGAR PECTIN



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