

This recipe uses "cutouts" for the top crust - make cute shapes from the pastry, bake them separately and then decoratively put on top of the pie AFTER it is baked. You can even dye them colors! How darling. Nope.

The Washington Post

Caramel Apple Pie



For the crust and cutouts

- 2 1/2 cups (280 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 16 tablespoons (226 grams/2 sticks) cold unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch (13-millimeter) cubes
- 1/2 cup (120 milliliters/115 grams) ice water, plus more as needed
- Gel food coloring, as needed (gel color will be stronger than liquid, which may need less vodka or it can become diluted)
- Vodka, as needed

For the filling

- 4 tablespoons (56 grams/1/2 stick) unsalted butter
- 10 medium (about 4 pounds) apples, such as Honeycrisp, peeled and sliced 1/4-inch thick
- 1 cup (212 grams) dark brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 1/2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 2/3 cup (132 grams) granulated sugar
- 2/3 cup (83 grams) all-purpose flour

Step 1

Make the crust and cutouts: In a large bowl, whisk together the flour and salt. Add the butter, tossing the cubes through the flour until each individual piece is well coated. "Cut" the butter into the flour by pressing the pieces between your fingers, flattening the cubes into big shards. As you work, continue to toss the butter through the flour, recoating the shingled pieces.

Step 2

Continue to cut the butter into the flour just until the pieces of butter are about the size of walnut halves.

Step 3

Make a well in the center of the flour mixture. Add the ice water to the well and, using a tossing motion with your hands, start to mix the two together (this begins to combine the ingredients without creating too much gluten). As the flour begins to become hydrated, you can start to use more of a kneading motion — but don't overdo it, as this will make the dough tough. Add more water as needed, about 1 tablespoon at a time, until the dough is properly hydrated. The dough should be uniformly combined and hold together easily, but it won't look totally smooth. (Pie dough that is too dry may have sort of a "dusty" appearance, or pockets of un-hydrated flour. It will not hold together and will appear crumbly. Pie dough that is too wet will feel sticky or tacky to the touch, and is often smoother and/or lighter in color.)

Step 4

Divide the dough in half and form both halves into even disks. Wrap each disk tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes and up to 2 days.

Step 5

Roll out the crust: Lightly dust a work surface with flour, and lightly dust a rolling pin, if desired. Roll out the dough to about 1/4-inch thickness, about 12 inches in diameter, rotating it as you work to prevent it from sticking. To transfer the dough to the pan, gently roll it up around the pin, then unfurl it into a 9-inch pie plate.

Step 6

Using scissors, trim away the excess dough, leaving about 1/2-inch overhang around the outside edge of the pie plate. Tuck the overhang under, pressing gently to make it flush with the edge of the pie plate and crimp as you like.

Step 7

Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 425 degrees.

Step 8

Using a fork, dock the crimped crust and chill well, at least 30 minutes. Cut a square of parchment paper slightly larger than the diameter of the pie plate and press it into the base of the crust. Fill with pie weights to the top inner rim of the pie plate. Bake for 15 to 17 minutes, or until the edges begin to lightly brown. Remove the parchment paper and pie weights and bake for 2 to 3 minutes more, or until the bottom of the crust appears dry and set. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool completely before filling.

Step 9

Lower the oven temperature to 400 degrees.

Step 10

Make the cutouts: Line a large, rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Lightly flour a work surface and roll out the remaining dough disk to about 1/4-inch thick. Using a small cookie cutter or pie stamp, cut as many cutouts out of the dough as you can. Transfer the cutouts to the prepared baking sheet, cover loosely with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 15 to 30 minutes. (You can use the scraps to reroll up to 2 additional times to get more cutouts.)

Step 11

In a small bowl, combine a few drops of the food coloring (if you're using gel, you only need about 1/8 teaspoon) and 1 to 2 teaspoons of vodka and, using a small craft paintbrush, mix to combine. Repeat as desired if you're making multiple colors.

Step 12

Remove the dough from the refrigerator and uncover. Using the brush, apply the "paint" to the surface of the pie dough.

Step 13

Bake for 10 to 20 minutes, or until the dough appears golden brown on the base (use a small offset spatula to gently lift the dough to check the bottom); the timing will depend on the size of your cutouts. Cool completely on a wire rack.

Step 14

Make the filling: In a Dutch oven or large, heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat, melt the butter. Continue to cook the butter, stirring occasionally, until its solids begin to brown and the mixture smells nutty, 4 to 5 minutes.

Step 15

Add the apples, brown sugar, lemon juice, cinnamon, vanilla, salt and nutmeg and toss until combined. Cook, stirring frequently, until a smooth, glossy sauce forms and thickly coats the apples, 4 to 5 minutes.

Step 16

In a medium bowl, whisk the granulated sugar and flour until combined. Sprinkle this mixture over the apples in the pot and stir well to combine. Continue to cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until the mixture comes to a boil and thickens, resembling a caramel sauce. Transfer to a large bowl, cover and cool completely.

Step 17

Transfer the cooled pie filling to the par-baked crust and place in the oven. Bake for about 35 minutes, or until the filling appears a bit matte on the surface. If needed, cover the crust edges with foil to prevent over-browning.

Step 18

Transfer the pie pan to a wire rack and let cool slightly, about 10 minutes. Decorate the warm pie with the cooled cutouts — they tend to "stick" to the filling a bit better, which can allow for easier slicing.

