

NANA'S APPLE PIE A LA MODE

When my nana passed away, there were only two things my brother Paul and I wanted of hers; her rolling pin and her stained, faded apple pie recipe she kept in her top kitchen draw next to some dried-out rubber bands that she saved for years. Paul has the recipe framed in his kitchen and I have the rolling pin. I've committed the recipe to memory.

Although Paul would say it's sacrilege, over the years I have taken some liberties with Nana's recipe. It's all here in its purest form, but I do have a couple of suggestions:

1. This is a classic Crisco shortening crust recipe. If shortening freaks you out, you can make a butter crust. Personally, I prefer butter crusts, but if you want to stay true to Nana's version, you have to pull out the Crisco.
2. You shouldn't use a Cuisinart because they weren't invented when Nana started making pies. But I won't tell if you won't.
3. Nana used one teaspoon of cinnamon, which, personally, I feel is one teaspoon too many. I'm not a huge cinnamon fan. Don't tell anyone, but I really only use a $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon. But hey, if you like cinnamon, go for it—just don't say I didn't warn you.
4. Nana used Rome baking apples, but I prefer Granny Smiths. You can really use any firm apple you like, just avoid mushy ones.
5. When you prick the top of the pie with the tines of the fork you should form the letter "N" for Nana. You may use another letter, but it might break my heart.

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE CRUST

2 cups all-purpose flour, sifted

1/2 teaspoon salt

3/4 cup shortening (12 T)

4 – 6 tablespoons ice water

FOR PIE FILLING

1 cup sugar

1 teaspoon cinnamon (or much less)

1 heaping tablespoon all-purpose flour

1 dash salt

3 drops vanilla

1 squirt of lemon

2 1/2 pounds tart apples, (4 apples for an 8" pie, 6 apples for a 9" pie), sliced

1 T butter

1/2 cup raisins or walnuts (optional)

TO FINISH

1 egg yolk, mix w/splash water

1 T coarse raw sugar

Vanilla Ice Cream

PREPARATION

CRUST

Whisk together the salt and flour in a big bowl. Using a hand pastry blender, add in the shortening, working it into the

salt/flour mixture until it resembles little pebbles.

Drizzle 4T of ice water, one tablespoon at a time over the flour mixture, tossing lightly with a fork. The pastry should be moist, not sticky. If it's still too dry, you can add up to 2 more tablespoons of ice water, if necessary.

Bring dough together, trying not to overwork it, and cut in half, making one half slightly larger than the other. Shape each half into a ball, then flatten it like a hamburger patty, wrap in clear wrap, and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. (Dough can be made day ahead or frozen.)

Take a piece of wax paper and place your pie plate upside down on the paper. Mark a circle around the pie plate in pencil and then flip the wax paper over because no one likes pencil-flavored dough. Roll out the larger dough half, using the penciled circle as your guide. Roll the dough a half-inch beyond the circle.

Repeat all of the above for the other dough half, although, no need to go too far beyond the penciled circle. Refrigerate both again for 30 minutes.

APPLE FILLING

Preheat oven to 425°.

In a small bowl, combine sugar, cinnamon, flour, and salt and mix well. Slice 7 cups of apples. Add the apples to the sugar mixture and toss lightly. Add the vanilla and toss just once more. If you like raisins, chopped nuts or other add-ins, now is the time to add in about a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of your preference.

Take the larger dough out of the fridge and flip it over onto the pie plate. Gently peel off the wax paper and flatten dough to fit the pie plate. Allow the extra dough to flop over the lip for now. Feel free to trim any excess odd pieces so you have a nice round shape.

Gently pour apple mixture onto bottom crust, spreading out apples so they are at an even height throughout. Dot the apples with a little butter. Squirt some lemon juice over mixture.

Take the other dough half from the fridge and flip it on top of the apples. Make sure it's centered before gently removing the wax paper.

Fold the top edge of the crust over the bottom edge so that you have a nice seal around the lip. Or if the bottom crust has more excess, fold the bottom over the top. The goal is to have the two crusts meet and look even around the edge. For a good seal, crimp the crusts together with a fork around the lip of the pie plate.

Prick the top of the pie with the tines of the fork so that you form the letter "N."

Beat egg yolk with one tablespoon of water and brush over the crust. Sprinkle coarse raw sugar on top.

Bake for 45 – 50 minutes or until the crust is golden brown. Remove from the oven, let cool until warm. Serve warm with vanilla ice cream.

Bottle the smell in your kitchen.