

Pie Crusts

After some trial and error, I've gotten pretty consistent on a pie crust recipe. Ingredients are a small portion of the puzzle, technique is what sets this pie crust apart from the rest.

Ingredients (proportions):

3 cups sifted enriched all-purpose flour
1 tsp. Salt
1 cup Butter Flavor Crisco (for best results, use 2/3 crisco and 1/3 cold butter)
9 tblsp. cold water (or so depending on your altitude)

I typically triple the above ingredients, this makes enough for 2 pies with some dough left over for ornamentation. Note: Get a spray atomizer to hold the water, and set it in the refrigerator for later. Now you are ready to begin:

To Begin:

Sift together the flour and salt. Split the Crisco, you will use 2/3 of the total amount required, the remaining 1/3 will be cold butter (for example, if making a triple batch, use 2 cups Crisco and 1 Cup Butter). Keep the 1/3 of your butter in a very cold place.

Cut in half of the Crisco with a pastry blender until pieces look like corn meal. Cut in remaining half of Crisco until the size of peas. Now it's time to add the very cold butter. Cut in the butter until the size of small peas is found again.

Get the spray bottle and spray a fine mist over the dough. Stir, and repeat until all is moistened. Gather up with fingers and form into ball. I really work it in with my hands at this point. The look you are aiming for is to have a ball of dough that sticks together slightly, as you work it with your hands the Crisco will start to soften and make a marbling appearance. As the Crisco softens, this will provide the additional moisture to bring the dough together. Meanwhile the cold butter will feel like small bumps. Now you should have a giant ball of dough that holds together very well but is not sticky. Cut this in half and wrap each half tightly with saran wrap. Place in refrigerator for at least 30 minutes.

Pie dough likes to be cold, as this cooks the hard butter bits will melt and form air pockets and will make the crust extra flaky. Another hint is to roll this on a cold marble slab that's lightly dusted with flour. I also use a marble rolling pin that is stored in the refrigerator.

FOR SINGLE CRUST PIE

After chilling the pie crust pre-bake. Cut a sheet of baking parchment or aluminum foil about two inches larger than the diameter of the pie. Press it into the pastry shell and fill with dried beans or rice. Bake 400° until the rim of the crust feels just set to the touch (about seven minutes). Remove from oven and carefully lift the parchment or foil and beans or rice from the crust. Prick the bottom and sides of the crust in several places with the tines of a fork. Check the crust several times during baking and prick it again with a fork if the crust puffs up. Cook until the crust is done and golden brown (about 10 minutes). Position strips of foil around the edge of crust, if it begins to get too brown.