

Rhubarb Custard Pie



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Ingredients

(Makes 1 x large fruit pie)

For the Flaky Pastry

This pastry recipe makes enough for two pie crusts, the filling makes enough for one pie so either double up on the filling and make two pies, give one away to someone you love very much or wrap the other half of the pastry tightly in cling film and foil and store in the freezer for up to 1 month for future pie projects.

You will require a 22cm enamel pie plate.

Ingredients

340g plain flour
1 tsp flaky sea salt
1 tbsp caster sugar
226g unsalted butter, fridge cold
376ml cold water
90ml apple cider vinegar

For the Rhubarb filling

400g rhubarb (preferably Yorkshire Forced rhubarb)
100g caster sugar
1/2 tsp sea salt
50g cornflour

For the Custard filling

100g caster sugar
1/4 tsp sea salt
60ml double cream
180g sour cream
1/8tsp fresh grated nutmeg
1/2tsp vanilla extract
2 large eggs (preferably free range)
Extra nutmeg to grate on finished pie

OFF PISTE

If you're into milling your own flour, love wholegrains or have access to heritage and alternative wheat varieties then this riff on the pastry ingredients is a great one to try.

85g Einkorn Flour (Wholemeal)
85g Spelt Flour (Wholemeal)
170g Unbleached Stoneground Flour
1 tsp Flaky Sea Salt
1 tbsp Caster Sugar
226g Unsalted Butter, Fridge Cold
376ml Cold Water
90ml Apple Cider Vinegar

Method

To make the flaky pastry

Place the flour, salt and sugar in a medium sized bowl, mix to distribute and place in the fridge to chill.

Weigh the water and apple cider vinegar into a jug. Set aside.

Grate the fridge cold butter on a box grater. Transfer to a bowl and place in the freezer along with the jug of vinegar water.

Allow the ingredients to cool right down whilst you prepare the rhubarb.

Trim the rhubarb and cut into inch long pieces. Any particularly chunky stems can be halved lengthways first to make for uniform chunks.

Place the rhubarb in a pan and add the sugar and the cornflour, stir to ensure the rhubarb is coated in the mixture.

Place the pan over a low/medium heat and cook gently until the rhubarb begins to give up its water, stir frequently.

As the rhubarb releases its juices it will be soaked up by the cornflour, causing the mixture to thicken.

Be warned, it can be prone to stick to the base of the pan so be vigilant and stir well. If I were you I would stay with the pan and keep stirring, within 10 minutes the mixture will be thickening. At this point increase the heat, it will begin to bubble and steam, allow this to happen for 1 minute and stir constantly. This stage is important as it allows the starch in the cornflour to fully cook out. The result should be a pan full of glossy pie filling that is somewhat translucent but studded with sticks of rhubarb that are soft but still hold their shape.

Scrape the mixture into a bowl and set aside to allow to cool completely. You can make the filling up to one day in advance and allow it to chill in the fridge overnight.

Remove the now chilled pastry ingredients from the fridge and freezer.

Add the grated butter to the flour and toss to coat the shards of frozen butter. Use your finger tips to rub the

butter into the flour until only crumbly pea sized pieces remain.

Add the icy cold vinegar and water solution 1 tbsp at a time and use a fork to mix. Continue to add the water 1 tbsp at a time. My dough usually requires around 10 tbsp to come together to the right stage but this will vary for everyone based on the brand of flour you use (they absorb water and hydrate at different rates) and the climatic conditions in your kitchen.

Tip the rough and shaggy looking dough out onto a clean work surface and finish bringing it together by hand. A little like wedging clay. If you've ever wedged clay.

Divide the dough in half, flatten out into a rough circle and wrap in cling film. Place the dough in the fridge to allow it to chill and relax for 20-30 minutes.

Meanwhile prepare your enamel pie plate.

Why enamel?

I ain't the pie police, just that in my experience I get a better, more even, crisp bake with enamel, the crust holds firm, with good contact to the plate, something I've had issues with when using glass pie plates.

Lightly and evenly butter the inside of the pie plate, being careful to cover all indents, ridges and the upper outer rim of the plate.

Remove one half of the pastry from the fridge, unwrap and place on a very lightly dusted work surface. Roll out to form a rough circular shape that is approximately 1 inch wider than the pie plate (see Fig 1.)

Lift the pastry with the aid of your rolling pin and lay into the pie plate, (Fig 2.) press the base in first, then press up the sides to ensure good contact between the pastry and the plate. This is a vital step as contact between pastry and plate is key to achieving a crisp result.

Trim any excess pastry overhang, but ensure you leave enough to crimp.

Crimp the edge with your thumb and forefinger, be firm to keep the crust tight, ensuring it will stay in place after baking.

Top tip - If at any point the pastry starts to feel too soft or becomes difficult to work with then just place the whole thing in the fridge for 10 minutes and allow it to firm back up. Take a breathe and relax. Its only pie.

Once you have the crust all crimped then place the case in the freezer to freeze completely until absolutely solid.

Place a baking sheet in your oven and pre-heat the oven to as high as it will go. This baking sheet is going to get super hot so please be careful. It will act as a brilliant source of heat to help cook the pasty case from the bottom to make a perfectly crisp crust.

Once the pie case has set solid in the freezer and the oven and baking sheet have thoroughly pre-heated you can remove the pie case from the freezer.

Line the inside of the crust with a sheet of foil, from top to bottom, pressing the shiny side of the foil in against the crust and around the edges to ensure good contact. Lay another sheet of foil from left to right shiny side down and again pressing in to make contact. Fill the lined shell with ceramic baking beans (see Fig 3.).

Now place the plate in the preheated oven on the pre heated baking tray. Immediately turn the oven temperature down to 200 degrees celsius and bake for 15-20 minutes, take a peak after this time, the base will not be fully cooked, but should be set. If it still looks a little soft and gooey then replace the foil and beans and continue to bake for a further 5 minutes until fully set and dry to the touch.

Remove the foil and beans and return the crust to the oven to bake for a further 5-10 minutes, after which time it should look like Fig 4.

Remove from oven. Allow the crust to cool for 5 minutes on a cooling rack. Whisk the egg white for sealing the crust in a small bowl to break it apart,

add 1 tbsp water and mix. Using a pastry brush, brush the inside of the pie, all in the base and up the sides. This will act to seal the entire crust and make it as waterproof as possible to prevent it being permeated by the future filling.

Return the brushed case back to the oven to set for about 5 minutes. After this time remove the crust from the oven and allow to cool completely.

Reduce the oven temperature to 160 degrees celsius.

Whilst cooling, make the custard pie filling.

Place the sugar, sea salt, double cream, sour cream, fresh grated nutmeg and vanilla extract in a bowl and whisk until smooth.

Add the eggs and again, whisk until smooth, before passing this mixture through a sieve.

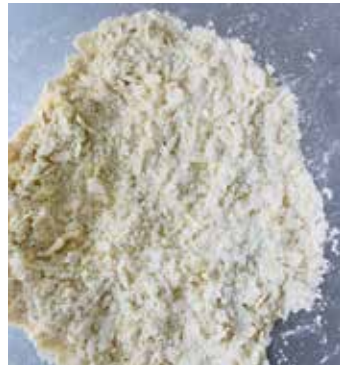
Remove the rhubarb filling from the fridge and place into the blind baked pie case, spread the mixture out into an even layer.

Place the pie onto a baking tray and pour the strained custard mixture over the layer of rhubarb and carefully place the baking tray in the oven.

Bake for 15-20 minutes and then rotate the pie in the oven and continue to bake for a further 15 minutes until the edges are set and puffed slightly. The centre should no longer be liquid but will still have a slight 'inner thigh' wobble as Nigella would say.

Remove the pie from the oven and allow to cool completely before cutting. Add a fresh grating of nutmeg to the top of the pie and serve as it is, with whipped cream or go 'a la mode' with a scoop of ice cream.

Pastry



Blind Bake



Fig 4



Rhubarb



Custard

