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## A perfect crust for Aunt Clara's Apple Crumb Pie

By Susie Iventosch



Apple Crumb Pie Photos Susie Iventosch

My very favorite fruit pie crust recipe is one handed down from my great Aunt Clara. She was a phenomenal cook and a brilliant baker and whenever she babysat for us, which was often, she put her skills to work in the kitchen. Her crust calls for cider vinegar, which helps to keep the dough tender by slowing the development of gluten. It also helps the dough to maintain a nice bright color and prevents it from turning gray. And, finally, it gives the crust a great flavor.

Just like the biscuits we featured earlier in the summer, the key to making a good, flaky crust is to make sure all of the ingredients are cold. That's why you want to use very cold butter and ice water. Some people even go so far as to put the flour and bowl along with the pastry cutter in the refrigerator for 30 minutes or so before making the dough. I don't do that, but I do use very cold butter and water. You can even refrigerate the dough for an hour or so, before rolling it out. I am

usually in too much of a hurry to do that, and generally roll my dough out right away, and it seems to work just fine for me.

I'll share one other trick I came across by accident last time I made apple pie and this is regarding the pie filling. I peeled, cored and cut the apples, and went so far as to add the sugar and spices, before I was interrupted and had to leave them for a couple of hours. What I discovered when I returned to the project, was that some of the juice had filtered down into the bottom of the bowl. While I didn't want to toss it, I was able to control how much of the liquid I put back in when filling the pie crust with the fruit. I usually toss some flour in with the apples to prevent the filling from being too soupy, but didn't need as much this time around.

Just yesterday, I bought freshly picked apples at the Farmers' market, so this recipe should be just in time for the fall apple harvest! You can make your pies ahead of time and freeze them for the fall holidays, either baked or unbaked, but be sure to do a little research on the best methods of freezing for each and how long you should keep them frozen before eating them.

How to freeze an unbaked apple pie:

<http://thepieacademy.com/how-to-freeze-an-apple-pie-before-baking/>

How to freeze a baked apple pie:

<http://thepieacademy.com/how-to-freeze-an-apple-pie-before-baking/>

Nonstick pie drip catcher: [www.randm.us/shop/bakeware/2737-pie-drip-catcher-non-stick/](http://www.randm.us/shop/bakeware/2737-pie-drip-catcher-non-stick/)

### Aunt Clara's Pie Crust

(Makes a single crust for bottom with a little leftover for making cinnamon-butter roll ups! Double if you prefer a full top crust instead of a crumb topping.)

#### INGREDIENTS

2 cups flour

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 1/2 cubes unsalted (very cold) butter, cut into small cubes

2 teaspoons cider vinegar

1/4-1/2 cup ice water (use a little at a time until all of the flour is incorporated into the dough.)

#### DIRECTIONS

Mix flour and salt in a large bowl. With a pastry cutter, crumble butter into flour until well incorporated. Sprinkle cider vinegar over mixture and toss with a fork. Add ice-cold water, a little at a time and blend with fork until dough is moist enough to roll into a ball, but not too wet. Roll into one large ball for the pie crust and a smaller ball to use for patching your crust, or cinnamon roll ups for snacking! At this point, you can flatten the ball into a disc and wrap the dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes to an hour, or roll it out right away.

To roll out, use a well-floured board and rolling pin and roll into a large circle, big enough to fill your pie dish (approximately 14-15 inches or so, depending upon the size of your pie dish) including a fluted edge at the top. Brush off any extra flour. Fold the circle in half or quarters and place in the center of the pie dish and open back into a circle and fit snugly into the bottom and sides of the dish, leaving an extra inch or two hanging over the edge. Roll this extra dough back toward the top of the pie dish and into a nice rolled edge. Use extra dough from your second ball if you need it to fill in any gaps. Flute this edge with your fingertips. Refrigerate until ready to fill and bake.

### Apple Crumb Pie

#### INGREDIENTS

1 recipe Aunt Clara's Pie Crust (see recipe nearby)

8-10 large, firm, tart apples (Granny Smith or Pippin) or a combination of firm tart and sweet (Pink Lady and Jonagold)

1/2 cup brown sugar  
1/4 cup white sugar  
1/4-1/3 cup all-purpose flour  
1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon  
1/2 teaspoon cardamom

Crumb topping:

1 cube ice cold butter  
1/4 cup flour  
2/3 cup brown sugar  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/4 teaspoon cardamom  
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg (optional)

Place all ingredients in bowl and using fingertips or pastry cutter, work dries into butter until crumbly.

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400 F. Peel, core and slice apples into 1/2-inch slices. Toss with sugar, spices and flour. Dump into prepared, unbaked pie crust and top with crumb topping. If you have a pie drip catcher, use it! (See link in info box.) It will save your oven from baked-on fruit filling. Place pie on drip catcher and bake for 45-50 minutes, or until top is golden brown and apples are al dente, but a knife easily pierces. Serve with ice cream, frozen yogurt or my favorite . a slice of extra-sharp cheddar cheese!



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