

Apple crumb pie

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A double-crust apple pie is one of life's great pleasures, no doubt. But if you are fond of crumb-topped muffins or coffee cakes or fruit crisps, a crumb-topped apple pie might just become your new favorite thing. It has mine.

I love the buttery, sugar-y crunch the crumb adds to the softened apples. I love the pie's handsome good-looks and the speed with which the whole thing comes together (perhaps it is psychological, but only rolling out one, bottom pie crust, as opposed to a top and bottom, seems like a huge win). For me, this dessert is the perfect combo of everything I love in a crisp or cobbler, coupled with everything I love in a pie.

Moreover, in this particular apple crumb pie that I am sharing with you here, much thought has gone into the filling and topping, in the hopes of offering you up something truly special (the crust is an oldie, but goodie, and needed no tweaking). Now, by no means does this imply that "much thought" does not go into **all** of the recipes I write, but this one caused a little heartache before I got it just right. And by "heartache," I mean I baked it for the first time for Thanksgiving, and I think it is fair to say, that it bordered on mediocre (and "bordered" might be an understatement).

The crumb was sandy and not very sweet and the apples mushy and tasteless. Needless to say there was a lot leftover. But now, a few pies later (and wiser), I promise: this pie does not disappoint. The filling is perfectly sweet and perfectly toothsome, and the crumb is crunchy, sweet and buttery and as far away from "sandy" as is possible.

Now, a couple of notes: my new thing – and I hope it will be yours, too – is cutting one's apples into thin

slices, as opposed to chunks, allowing you to pack more apples in the pie, and making for the prettiest of slices. In addition, be sure to combine the crumb ingredients with your fingers until there are no more sandy bits in the bowl. This should be easy, but if for some reason sandiness persists, add a tablespoon more of butter. Be sure to tent the pie with foil about halfway through the baking time, to avoid burning the crumb, and try to let the pie rest for at least two hours, or so, post-bake, so the filling really sets.

And a final plug for this pie: it is likely you have each and every ingredient already in your pantry, and if not, can find everything you need at the corner store. Thus, there really should be nothing standing between you and pie, save for a couple of hours.

Cream cheese crust

1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
 1 tbsp granulated sugar
 1/4 tsp baking powder
 1/2 tsp salt
 4 oz. cream cheese, chilled, cubed
 1/2 cup unsalted butter, chilled, cubed
 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar, chilled
 1 tbsp ice water
 1-2 tbsp room temp cream cheese for spreading on the crust

Crumb topping

1 cup all-purpose flour
 3/4 cup dark brown sugar
 Rounded 1/4 tsp table salt
 1/2 tsp baking powder
 1/2 cup unsalted butter, cold, diced into small pieces
 Turbinado sugar for sprinkling

Apple filling

2/3 cup granulated sugar
 1/2 tsp freshly ground cinnamon
 Pinch of table salt
 4 tsp arrowroot powder, or cornstarch
 2 pounds Granny Smith apples, about four large ones



Egg wash

Egg
 Pinch of salt

Instructions:

To make the crust, combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt in the bowl of a food processor fitted with the metal blade and process briefly to combine. Add the cream cheese and butter, and pulse until the butter and cream cheese are broken up, but are still in small chunks.

Add the vinegar and ice water, pulsing the machine as you do. Once a bit of dough can be pinched together between two fingers and hold its shape, dump it into a medium bowl and, using your hands, bring the dough together into a disk. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least two hours or up to three days.

Remove the disk from the refrigerator, lightly flour a work surface, and roll it into a 10- or 11-inch circle. Place it in a 9-inch pie plate, crimp the edges and spread a tablespoon or two of the room temp cream cheese over the bottom of the crust. This will protect the pie from developing a soggy bottom while it bakes. Transfer to the freezer for one hour.

Preheat the oven to 400-degrees.

To make the crumb topping, combine all of the topping ingredients in a medium bowl and using your fingers, rub the butter into the dry ingredients until you are able to form the mixture

into one large clump. Place in the refrigerator while preparing the filling.

To make the filling, place the sugar, cinnamon, salt, and arrowroot powder in a large bowl and whisk to combine. Peel and core the apples and slice them quite thin, about 1/4 inch thick. Place them in the large bowl, tossing them in the sugar mixture to cover.

To make the egg wash, combine the egg and the salt in a small bowl, and brush along the crimped edge of the crust.

Pile the apples in the crust and cover in the crumb, pressing it down lightly to adhere. Leave a bit of the filling exposed at the top of the pie, so that you can see it when it is bubbling and ready to be pulled from the oven.

Place on a parchment-lined cookie sheet, and bake for about one hour and fifteen minutes, or until the filling bubbles in the center, or the internal temp of the pie registers 195 degrees. Rotate the pie at the halfway point and tent with foil.

Let rest until it reaches room temperature, about three hours, if you are feeling patient. If not, at least two hours. Serve slices with vanilla ice cream. The pie will keep lightly covered in plastic wrap on the counter for up to three days. ●

Jessie is a baker and cookbook author; you can learn more about her through her website jessiesheehanbakes.com.