



## Colonial-Era Apple Pie Recipe

By Emily Vieyra-Haley, *Bowne House Educator*



### Ingredients for the Crust

- 2 cups of flour
- 1 ½ sticks of butter (12 tablespoons)
- Pinch of salt
- 5-7 tablespoons of cool water

### Ingredients for the Filling

- 4-5 apples, preferably of the varieties Granny Smith, Braeburn, Cortland, Golden Delicious, Jonagold Honeycrisp, or McIntosh.
- Tip: You can add a sprinkle (or more!) of sugar to your pie if your apples are too tart.



## Instructions

1. The recipe we are going to use dates from 1750, written by William Ellis, a farmer in England. His book, *The Country Housewife's Family Companion*, was an advice manual on how to efficiently and frugally run a house and farm. His section on apple pies begins as follows:

*Apple pies and pasties are a main part of a prudent, frugal farmer's family-food, because the meal and apples that make them are commonly the produce of his land, and are ready at all times to be made use of in pies or pasties, for giving his family an agreeable palatable repast; a covered or turn-over pasty for the field, and the round pie for the house, the first being of a make and size that better suits the hand and pocket than the round pie, and therefore are more commonly made in farmers families; for one, or a piece of one, being carried in the plowman's and plowboy's pocket, sustains their hunger till they come home to dinner, and oftentimes pleases them beyond some sort of more costly eatables; nor is it less wholesome than pleasant, for that the ingredients of the apple pie are rather antidotes against than promoters of the scurvey; In short it is the apple pie and pasty....that I take to be some of the cheapest and most agreeable food a farmer's family can make use of" [ p. 39].*

2. There are two parts to an apple pie; the crust and the fruit filling. Ellis provides us first with several suggestions for how to make a crust, from the least expensive, by using lard and flour, to a "better" way by using butter, flour and water, and that is what we will use.

*"Melt three pounds of fresh butter in boiling water, as soon as it boils take it off the fire, and mix all with a peck of flower, and work it into a paste, for apple pie, meat pie or any other that requires a standing crust"[ p. 44]*

3. The quantities he uses amount to a larger than usual amount for the modern day cook; I have consulted other crust recipes and I have here proportions



that work today for a single apple pie. You will need 2 cups of flour, 1 ½ sticks of butter, a pinch of salt, 5-7 tablespoons of cool water, and 4-5 apples.

4. Preheat your oven to 400 degrees F.
5. Simply set out your butter and add the flour to it. Start mixing with a large spoon to get the flour to meet the butter, and then I recommend you use your hands to really combine the butter and flour. Add a pinch of salt, and once you see the butter start to absorb into the flour, add a few tablespoons of chilled water, one spoon at a time.
6. Once it has all become a thick ball, divide it in half. (The ball of dough doesn't have to be perfect - if there are still little lumps of butter in it, that is fine.)
7. Take one half and lay it on a flat surface sprinkled with flour. Take a rolling pin, and roll out the dough to a circumference that will be a little larger than your pie plate. Place that sheaf of dough into your pie plate - don't worry about greasing your pie plate, there is enough butter in the dough to keep it from sticking.
8. Roll out your other half of the dough to a similar size, and then lay it aside on a plate.
9. Now let's get to work on the filling - you will be surprised with how easy this is! Mr. Ellis gives us several ways to make filling, and then settles on how it is made in his home:

*"...my servant-maid bakes apple pies or pasties with her bread, but does not pare her apples, only cores them, takes away their stalks and cuts them in small bits with a knife"[p. 46]*
10. We will not be peeling our apples; we will just remove the cores, and then chop up the apples. We will not use any spices, and only maybe a touch of sugar if our apples are too tart. You will only need 4 or 5 big apples, and you can mix your varieties. If you can only find small apples, you might need 8 to 10.



11. Using a sharp knife, chop your apples, and you can certainly freestyle it here. You do not have to chop so small, because then the apples will become a bit like applesauce in the pie, not that that is a bad thing; but if you want the apples to maintain their shape somewhat, you'll want to keep the pieces a little chunky.
12. Lay your pieces of apple in the crust, and keep on piling and spreading them out. You can stack as much as you like inside, keeping in mind that the apples will reduce somewhat while baking.
13. When you have finished placing your apples, it is time to lay on the top crust. Place it over the apples carefully, and seal the edges together. It does not have to be perfect nor symmetrical; this is rustic homemade pie. Be sure to cut a few slits in the top to allow for steam to escape.
14. Allow the pie to bake for a good 40 minutes; depending on the thickness of your pan, it may take up to 15 minutes more. You'll know your pie is about ready when three things happen: you smell the wonderful aroma of apples baking, your crust is turning a light brown, and a little bit of the juices are bubbling out of the holes on top.
15. Remove the pie from the oven; let cool for at least 15 minutes to let the apples set inside.
16. Cut and serve; note how the apple peels have softened, and all the natural flavors of the fruit are actually all the spice needed! Enjoy and happy holidays!