

BASIC PIE CRUST

Mixing: 10-15 Minutes

Rolling the Dough: 10-15 Minutes

Nothing beats a flaky homemade pie crust but many people don't make crust from scratch believing they won't succeed. Along with taste and texture, another plus is being able to avoid hydrogenated fats and still enjoy a great pie. Natural food stores usually offer several options. Spectrum and Earth Balance brands both offer shortening and sticks that I have successfully used. Look for shortening products that are non-hydrogenated and trans fat free or for an occasional splurge, good ole' Crisco makes the lightest flakiest crust ever.

For a 9" double crust:

¾ cup vegetable shortening

2 cups flour (white, whole wheat, rye or spelt all work well alone or mixed)

1 teaspoon salt

4-5 tablespoons iced cold water (4 maximum when using spelt or rye)

MIXING PIE CRUST: Cut the shortening into flour using a knife or fork. Add 1 tsp salt and then it works best to just use your fingers to break up the shortening into smaller than pea size bits. Mix to a crumbly look, add 4 tbsp. of ice-cold water to whole grain flours or 5 tbsp. to white and wheat flours. Use fork to quickly distribute the dampness but do not beat (the dough should stick together but if it doesn't, carefully sprinkle in 1 more tbsp. of water).

Gather up the dough in your hands and divide into 2 balls. Flatten into round smooth "pancakes" about 3/4 "thick. Wrap in plastic and chill for 1 hour in fridge.

ROLLING THE DOUGH: Start by covering your counter with a piece of wax paper. This works very well to avoid the frustrations of tearing and sticking. Sprinkle the same type of flour used in your crust onto the wax paper. Place chilled dough on flour, lightly sprinkle more flour on the top side of dough. Cover with a top sheet of wax paper and roll from the center out to the edges on all sides. When the dough is about 1/4 "thick, lift up the top paper, loosen dough from the bottom paper and dust both sides lightly again with flour. Return the paper to both sides of the dough and continue rolling. As the crust thins it will work best to loosen the top paper, flour, put paper back on top, flip the whole thing over and then loosen other side and flour. Have your pie plate close by and when your circle is slightly wider than the pie plate, remove the top paper, flip the crust over onto the plate and gently remove the remaining wax sheet. Fill the pie shell. Roll out the top crust, place over the pie and press and fold the top and bottom edges together. The edge should be scalloped and stand up slightly on the rim of the pie plate to better catch any juices that bubble out in baking. Cut 5-6 vents in the top crust radiating out from the center. Voila!!

Instructions provided by Susan Reeder Moss, a friend of Maria's