

Thanksgiving Day Menu

From Mel's Kitchen Cafe

www.melskitchencafe.com

All the recipes I've included on my Thanksgiving menu are my personal favorites for the big day and include a variety of classics and other recipes to change things up a bit. If you are feeding a larger or smaller crowd, adjust the recipes accordingly. Use the table and the recipes together – all make-ahead instructions are in the table and includes plans for up to a week ahead of time all the way down to serving time. You may want to fill in the little details or any changes you make (adding or varying the recipes). This is a guide meant to help in planning and preparing; change it up as you need to suit your own tastes/time!

Happy Thanksgiving!

The Plan Part 1

| | Roasted Turkey and Perfect Gravy | Roasted Garlic and Parmesan Mashed Potatoes | Sweet Potato Casserole | Creamy Confetti Corn | Make-ahead Green Bean Casserole | Classic Stuffing |
|--------------------------|---|--|--|---|---|---|
| One Week in Advance | Thaw that turkey, baby! If it is frozen, place it on a baking tray and place it in the refrigerator. You want to plan on about 24 hours for every five pounds of turkey. | | | | The topping and casserole can be frozen separately for up to 2 months. | |
| 2 days in advance | Prepare the brine, let it cool and refrigerate. | | Follow the recipe, placing the potatoes in the baking dish and refrigerate covered. Reserve the sugar/zest topping separately. | Prepare the confetti corn. Scoop into a baking dish and sprinkle with bacon. Cover and refrigerate. | | |
| 24 Hours in Advance | The night before roasting, combine the brine, water and ice in a large bucket (5-gallon or larger) and brine the turkey (see recipe for details). | If desired, the potatoes can be boiled and prepared the day before and refrigerated. | | | | Toast the bread for the stuffing. Let cool completely and store in a covered container/resealable bag. Prepare the vegetable mixture. Let cool and refrigerate in a covered container. |
| 4-6 Hours Before Serving | Prepare turkey for roasting (prepare aromatics) and start roasting. | Place the chilled potatoes in a slow cooker and heat on warm/low until ready to serve. | | | | Assemble the stuffing. Cover and refrigerate if not baking right away. |
| 2 Hours Before Serving | Carve turkey and keep it warm if it comes out of the oven with a lot of time to spare (wait to carve until at least an hour before serving). Prepare the turkey gravy – it can be prepared 1-2 hours in advance and kept warm on the stove. I like to roast my turkey so it comes out of the oven an hour or so before eating so I can use the oven for last minute heating of other dishes. Well-covered, it will stay plenty warm until serving. | Prepare the potatoes now if you didn't make them in advance. Keep them warm in the pot until ready to scoop into a serving bowl. | | | An hour and a half before serving, heat the oven to 400 degrees. Remove the layer of plastic wrap from the baking dish and replace the foil. Bake, covered, until the sauce is bubbling and the beans are tender, about 80 minutes, stirring the beans thoroughly after 50 minutes. Remove the foil and spread the frozen topping mixture over the beans. Bake until golden brown, about 8-10 minutes. <i>*If you are using your oven for other things</i> | |

| | Roasted Turkey and Perfect Gravy | Roasted Garlic and Parmesan Mashed Potatoes | Sweet Potato Casserole | Creamy Confetti Corn | Make-ahead Green Bean Casserole | Classic Stuffing |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|--|---|--|
| | | | | | <i>that are baking at 350 degrees, this can be reheated at 350 degrees also, but it might take about 2 hours to heat through so plan accordingly*</i> | |
| 30 minutes - 1 Hour Before Serving | | | <p>Top the casserole with the reserved sugar/zest topping. Bake at 350 for 15-20 minutes or so to heat through, then pop it under the broiler to take care of the yummy topping. Keep warm.</p> <p><i>All of these dishes that need to be baked in the last hour can be baked in one oven (if you have two, awesome!) on multiple racks, just rotate everything about halfway through.</i></p> | <p>Uncover the baking dish, pop into the oven and bake for 15-20 minutes until heated through. This can be baked the same time as the sweet potatoes (both baking dishes should fit on one oven rack). Keep warm.</p> <p><i>All of these dishes that need to be baked in the last hour can be baked in one oven (if you have two, awesome!) on multiple racks, just rotate everything about halfway through.</i></p> | | <p>Bake the stuffing (it will take about 45 minutes total – a bit longer if you are baking it at 350 degrees if you only have one oven and need it at that temp for other dishes and not 375 like the recipe states).</p> <p><i>All of these dishes that need to be baked in the last hour can be baked in one oven (if you have two, awesome!) on multiple racks, just rotate everything about halfway through.</i></p> |

The Plan Part 2

| | Lion House Rolls | Honey Lime Fruit Salad | Massaged Kale and Craisin Salad | Pumpkin Pie Sheet Cake | Apple Crumb Pie | Chocolate Mousse Cheesecake Pie |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--|---|---|---|
| One Week in Advance | | | | | Make pie crust, roll out into the pie plate, cover with plastic wrap and freeze (this can be done up to a month in advance). | |
| 2 Days in Advance | | | | Make the pumpkin pie sheet cake. Cool. Cover with plastic wrap and store in the refrigerator. | | Make the pie and keep covered in the refrigerator until ready to serve (you can also do this 24 hours in advance, too). |
| 24 Hours in Advance | Make the roll dough, let it go through the first rise. Shape the rolls and place on the baking sheet. Cover with greased plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. | Chop and prepare all fruit (except strawberries) and combine in a bowl or covered container. Refrigerate. Assemble honey/lime mixture and refrigerate separately. | Prepare kale and other salad ingredients. Toss and refrigerate until ready to serve (store feta separately). | | Take out pie crust from the freezer. Let it thaw while making the apple filling. Fill the pie and bake. Cool completely. Cover and keep refrigerated or at room temperature. | |
| 4-6 Hours Before Serving | | | | Prepare the sweetened whipped cream and refrigerate. | | |
| 2 Hours Before Serving | Take the rolls out and let them come to room temperature and double in size (about 2 hours or so depending on the warmth of your kitchen). | | | | | |
| 30 minutes - 1 Hour Before Serving | Bake the rolls (I usually do this after everything else is out of the oven so they are hot and fresh and they really do need to bake at a higher temp than 350 degrees). | Stir in strawberries to the prepared fruit. Toss with dressing. Add poppy seeds. | Toss with feta cheese and serve. | Unless you want to serve the sheet cake completely chilled, take it out about an hour before to take the chill off a bit. | If desired, the pie can be reheated in a 250 degree oven for 15 or so minutes before serving. | |

The Recipes

Roasted {Brined} Turkey

Ingredients

1 (14 to 16 pound) frozen young turkey

For the brine:

1 cup kosher/coarse salt

1/2 cup light brown sugar

1 gallon vegetable stock

1 tablespoon black peppercorns

1 1/2 teaspoons allspice berries

1 1/2 teaspoons chopped candied ginger

1 gallon heavily iced water

For the aromatics:

1 red apple, sliced (no need to core or peel)

1/2 onion, sliced

1 cinnamon stick

1 cup water

4 sprigs fresh rosemary

6 leaves fresh sage

Canola oil

Directions

1. About 4-5 days before roasting, take the turkey out of the freezer (if using a fresh turkey, you can omit this step and just keep the turkey refrigerated), and place it in a 9X13-inch pan or larger to catch any raw turkey juices and place the pan in the refrigerator to thaw.
2. 1-2 days before roasting, combine the vegetable stock, salt, brown sugar, peppercorns, allspice berries, and candied ginger in a large stockpot over medium-high heat. Stir occasionally to dissolve solids and bring to a boil. Then remove the brine from the heat, cool to room temperature, and refrigerate until ready to use.
3. The night before roasting, combine the brine, water and ice in a large bucket (5-gallon or larger). Remove the innards from the turkey and place the thawed turkey breast side down in the brine. the turkey should be fully submerged in the liquid and ice. If necessary, weigh down the bird to ensure it is fully immersed, cover, and refrigerate or set in a cool area for 8 to 16 hours. Because I live in a cold climate, I usually stick my brining turkey on the back porch or in the garage, after I have made sure it will be cool enough to keep the turkey safe from high, warmer temperatures.
4. Move an oven rack to the lowest position and preheat the oven to 500 degrees F. Remove the bird from brine and rinse inside and out with cold water. Discard the brine.
5. Place the bird on a roasting rack inside a half sheet pan or roasting pan and pat dry with paper towels. Combine the apple, onion, cinnamon stick, and 1 cup of water in a microwave safe dish and microwave on high for 5 minutes. Add steeped aromatics to the turkey's cavity along with the rosemary and sage. Tuck the wings underneath the bird and coat the skin liberally with canola oil.
6. Roast the turkey on lowest level of the oven at 500 degrees F for 30 minutes. Reduce the oven temperature to 350 degrees and continue to roast for another 1 1/2 to 2 hours, until the internal temperature of the turkey is 161 degrees. A 14 to 16 pound bird should require a total of 2 to 2 1/2 hours of roasting. Let the turkey rest, loosely covered with foil or a large mixing bowl for 15 minutes before carving.

Perfect Gravy

Ingredients

1 tablespoon canola oil
Neck and giblets from turkey
3 tablespoons butter
1/4 cup flour
Pan drippings from roasted turkey (about 1/4 cup), fat separated and discarded
2 cups chicken/turkey/vegetable stock or broth
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

1. In a medium saucepan, heat the oil over medium heat until shimmering. Brown the turkey neck and giblets in the oil, turning every few minutes, until they are well browned and there are little browned bits stuck to the bottom of the pot. Remove the giblets and neck and discard.
2. Reduce the heat to medium-low and add the butter to the pot and let it melt, stirring and scraping up the browned bits on the bottom of the pan.
3. Add the flour and pan drippings (separate the fat from the pan drippings before adding or else the gravy will be too greasy) and stir to combine. Cook over medium-low or medium heat, stirring constantly, for 1-2 minutes, until the butter/flour mixture is golden.
4. Slowly whisk in the broth and cook over medium heat, stirring or whisking often, for about 10-15 minutes until the gravy has thickened and is bubbly and hot. Season with salt and pepper.

Roasted Garlic and Parmesan Mashed Potatoes

Yield: Serves 6-8

Ingredients

5 pounds Yukon gold potatoes, peeled, rinsed and diced

2 teaspoons salt

1 cup freshly grated parmesan cheese

4 tablespoons butter

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk

Salt and pepper to taste

4-5 cloves roasted garlic (*trim the pointy end off a head of garlic, place sprout-side down on a piece of aluminum foil and drizzle with a tablespoon of olive oil, fold sides of foil up to enclose the garlic completely and cook in a 350 degree oven for 20 minutes, or until the garlic is tender; the cloves squeeze right out of their skins when they are ready*)

Directions

For the mashed potatoes, In a large pot, place the potatoes and cover with water (by at least two inches). Add the salt. Bring to a boil, and cook the potatoes until tender, about 15 minutes. Drain and return to the hot pot. Begin mashing the potatoes. Add the butter and mash in to the potatoes. Add the milk, cheese, roasted garlic and salt and pepper to taste. Mash until the potatoes are smooth. Serve immediately.

Sweet Potato Casserole

Yield: Serves 6-8

Ingredients

4 tablespoons light or dark brown sugar
1 teaspoon freshly grated orange zest plus 2 tablespoons orange juice (from 1 orange)
3 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1 1/2-inch pieces
4 tablespoons butter, cubed
1/4 cup heavy cream
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Directions

1. Adjust an oven rack to the middle position in the oven and preheat the oven to 400 degrees. F. Mix 3 tablespoons of the brown sugar and 1/2 teaspoon of the orange zest together in a small bowl until thoroughly combined (reserve the other 1/2 teaspoon orange zest for later). Set aside.
2. Lay out 4 pieces of aluminum foil, each about 18 inches in length. Take two of the sheets and lay them perpendicular to each other (so it forms a thick cross) and do the same with the other two sheets of foil. Divide the sweet potatoes in half and put one half on one set of foil and the remaining potatoes on the other set of foil. Sprinkle the remaining tablespoon sugar over all the potatoes in both packets. Fold the opposite edges of the foil toward each other and crimp the edges to seal tightly. Place the packets inside a rimmed baking sheet and bake until the potatoes are tender, 45 to 60 minutes. Remove the baking sheet from the oven and preheat the broiler.
3. Carefully open one end from each pouch, careful to avoid escaping steam, and pour the potatoes and any remaining liquid into a blender or food processor. Add the butter, cream, orange juice, salt, cinnamon and remaining 1/2 teaspoon orange zest, pepper and cayenne. Process until the mixture is completely smooth. Transfer the potatoes to a 2- or 3-quart baking dish (that is broiler safe) and sprinkle evenly with the reserved brown sugar/zest mixture. Broil the sweet potatoes until the topping is lightly browned and bubbly, 2 to 4 minute. Serve warm.

Creamy Confetti Corn with Bacon

Yield: Serves 6-8 as a side dish

Ingredients

8 slices bacon, chopped
2 12-ounce packages frozen corn kernels, white or yellow
1/2 cup chopped onion, white, yellow or red
1/2 cup finely chopped red bell pepper
1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, light or regular, cubed
1-2 tablespoons milk
1 teaspoon sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon pepper
4 green onions, green parts finely chopped (white parts discarded)

Directions

1. In a large nonstick skillet, cook the chopped bacon until golden and crisp. Scoop the bacon to a paper-towel lined plate and discard all the bacon grease except for a thin coating on the pan, maybe a teaspoon or so.
2. Add the corn, onion, and red pepper, and cook over medium heat, stirring every so often, until the vegetables are tender and the corn is heated through, 6-8 minutes. Add the cream cheese and milk, stirring until the cream cheese melts and the mixture is evenly combined.
3. Stir in the sugar, salt and pepper. Add more salt to taste if needed. Stir in the green onions.
4. Serve warm topped with the reserved bacon.
5. This dish can be made up to 2 days ahead of time. Scoop the creamy corn mixture into an oven-safe dish, sprinkle with the bacon and cover with a lid or plastic wrap. Store in the refrigerator. When ready to eat, heat the corn dish in a 325 degree oven for 15-20 minutes until heated through.

Make-Ahead Green Bean Casserole

Yield: Serves 10 to 12 as a side dish (can be easily halved and baked in a smaller dish)

Ingredients

Topping:

2 slices hearty sandwich bread, white or wheat, torn into pieces
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 cups canned fried onions

Casserole:

3 tablespoons unsalted butter
10 ounces white mushrooms, sliced thin
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
6 garlic cloves, minced
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
1 3/4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
1 1/2 cups heavy cream
2 pounds fresh green beans, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
1/4 cup cornstarch

Directions

1. For the topping: Pulse bread, butter, and salt in food processor until coarsely ground. Combine bread mixture and canned fried onions in a bowl, transfer to a zipper-lock freezer bag, and freeze. (I placed the topping bag right on top of the casserole in the freezer so I could keep track of both.)
2. For the casserole: Melt the butter in a large 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the mushrooms, salt, and pepper and cook until the mushrooms release their liquid, about 5 minutes. Increase the heat to medium-high and cook until all the liquid has evaporated, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and thyme and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in the flour and cook until golden, stirring, about 1 minute. Slowly whisk in broth and cream and bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the sauce has thickened, about 10 minutes.
3. In a large bowl, toss the green beans with the cornstarch until the beans are evenly coated. Transfer the beans to a 9X13-inch baking dish. Pour the warm mushroom mixture evenly over the beans. Let the casserole cool completely on the counter. Once cooled, cover with a layer of plastic wrap and then a layer of foil. Freeze for up to 2 months.
4. When ready to bake, adjust oven rack to the middle position and heat the oven to 400 degrees. Remove the layer of plastic wrap from the baking dish and replace the foil. Bake, covered, until the sauce is bubbling and the beans are tender, about 80 minutes, stirring the beans thoroughly after 50 minutes. Remove the foil and spread the frozen topping mixture over the beans. Bake until golden brown, about 8-10 minutes. Serve.

Classic Herb Stuffing

Yield: Makes a 9X13-inch dish

Ingredients

7 tablespoons butter, plus more for dish and baking
1 loaf rustic/artisan/crusty white bread, cut into 1/2-inch cubes (about 9 1/2 cups bread cubes)
Salt and Pepper to taste
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
5 celery stalks, thinly sliced on the diagonal
2 medium onions, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced in half-moons
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1/2 to 2 cups chicken broth
1/2 teaspoon poultry seasoning
3 tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1 teaspoon dried sage
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1 teaspoon dried rosemary (rubbed between fingers to crumble lightly)
3 to 4 large eggs, lightly beaten

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°. Melt 5 tablespoons butter in the microwave. Toss with bread cubes in a large bowl. Spread in a single layer on 1 or 2 rimmed baking sheets. Toast in the oven, tossing once, until golden, about 20 minutes. Let cool completely.
2. Heat the oil and remaining 2 tablespoons butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat until butter has melted. Add celery, onions, garlic, and a pinch of salt; cook, stirring occasionally, until golden brown and soft, about 10 minutes.
3. Put vegetable mixture and toasted bread into large bowl. Stir in poultry seasoning, herbs, and 2 cups broth into stuffing. Stir in 4 eggs until bread mixture is well coated. Spoon into a buttered 13-by-9-inch baking dish, and dot generously with butter. Cover with foil, and bake in a 375° oven for 25 minutes. Uncover, and bake until golden brown, 10 to 15 minutes more.

Lion House Dinner Rolls

Yield: Makes about 2 dozen rolls

Ingredients

2 tablespoons active dry yeast
2 cups warm water
1/3 cup sugar
1/3 cup butter, softened
1 egg
2 1/2 teaspoons salt
2/3 cup nonfat dry milk
5-6 cups flour

Directions

1. In a large bowl, combine the yeast and water. Let stand 5 minutes (no need to do this if using instant yeast – just add the yeast and water together with the other ingredients). Add sugar, butter, salt, dry milk, 2 cups flour and egg. Beat together until very smooth. Add remaining flour gradually (about 1/2 cup at a time) until a soft but not sticky dough is formed. Knead the dough for at least five minutes if using an electric mixer and for at least 10 minutes if mixing the dough by hand. When the dough is smooth, supple and elastic, place it in a lightly greased large bowl covered with greased plastic wrap and let it rise until doubled.
2. Separate the dough into two portions. Roll each section out to an 11X14-inch rectangle. Brush the top with melted butter. Using a pizza cutter or sharp knife, cut the dough into two pieces, the long way (see photos below). Then slice the dough into five or six strips across so you end up with 10 to 12 small rectangles. Roll each small rectangle up like a snail and place on a silpat-lined or lightly greased baking sheet with the roll resting on its open edge. Repeat with the second portion of dough.
3. Cover the rolls with lightly greased plastic wrap and let them rise until doubled. Bake at 375 degrees for 12-14 minutes until they are nicely browned.

Honey Lime Fruit Salad

Yield: Serves 4

Ingredients

1 (20 oz.) can pineapple chunks, drained well
1 can mandarin oranges, drained well
2-3 ripe kiwi, peeled and sliced into thick half moons
1 cup green grapes, halved
1 cup strawberries, quartered
Zest from one lime, about 1 tablespoon
2 tablespoons honey
1 teaspoon poppy seeds (optional)

Directions

1. Combine the fruit in a medium-large serving bowl. Add the lime zest and poppy seeds, if using, and gently toss.
2. Drizzle the honey over the fruit and again, gently mix until the fruit is evenly coated with the honey. Serve.

Massaged Kale and Craisin Salad with Feta Cheese

Yield: Serves 6

Ingredients

1 bunch kale
3/4 teaspoon coarse kosher salt or sea salt
1/4 cup finely diced red onion
1/2 cup dried cranberries/craisins
3/4 cup small-diced apple
1/3 cup toasted sunflower seeds
1/4 cup olive oil
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1/2 teaspoon sugar
1/3 cup crumbled Feta cheese

Directions

1. Wash the kale and pat it dry. Slice off the stiff stems below the leaves and continue slicing the stem away from the leaf until you have cut a thin v-shape into the kale leaf and removed the tough stem all the way up. Stack the kale leaves two or three at a time, roll them up, and slice the leaves into thin ribbons.
2. Place the kale ribbons in a large mixing bowl. Add the salt and massage it into the kale with your hands for two minutes. You'll notice the kale start to turn a darker green and the texture of the kale will begin to soften a bit.
3. Toss in the red onions, craisins, apples, and sunflower seeds. In a small bowl, whisk together the oil, vinegar and sugar. Pour over the salad and toss. Sprinkle feta cheese over the top and serve. The salad can be refrigerated for up to a day before serving (if doing this, I would suggest refrigerating the salted kale separately from the other ingredients and tossing the salad together an hour or two before serving).

Pumpkin Pie Bars

Yield: 12 servings

Ingredients

Crust:

- 2/3 cup granulated sugar
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 8 tablespoons butter (1 stick), melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 large egg

Filling:+

- 2 large eggs
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/8 teaspoon cloves
- 1 (15-ounce) can pumpkin
- 1 (12-ounce) can evaporated milk (or 1 cup cream)

Sweetened whipped cream for serving

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. For the crust, whisk together the sugar, flour, baking powder and salt. Pour in the melted butter, vanilla and egg. Stir to combine (I use my hands at the end to combine the dough into a cohesive ball).
3. Press the dough into the bottom of a lightly greased 9X13-inch pan.
4. For the filling, you can use the same bowl that was used for the crust as long as there aren't any large clumps of dough remaining in it. Whisk the eggs until light and creamy. Stir in the sugar, salt, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves and pumpkin. Whisk to combine. Stir in the evaporated milk or cream.
5. Pour the filling over the crust.
6. Bake for 35-45 minutes or until a knife inserted into the middle comes out clean.
7. Cool completely. Cut into squares and serve with sweetened whipped cream.

Apple Crumb Pie

Yield: Serves 8

Note: My favorite combination of apples is McIntosh apples with a firm, sweet apple (like Fuji, Gala or Honeycrisp).

Ingredients

Pie Crust:

- 1 1/2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
- 10 tablespoons butter, frozen
- 1/2 cup sour cream (not lowfat or light)

Apple Filling:

- 3 pounds apples (see note)
- 1/4 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice (from about 2 lemons)
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 2 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1/2 cup sour cream (optional)

Crumb Topping:

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup packed light or dark brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) cold butter, cut into small pieces

Directions

1. In a medium bowl, lightly whisk together the flour, salt and sugar. Using the large holes of a box grater, grate the butter into the dry ingredients. With a fork, toss the butter and flour mixture until the butter pieces are all evenly coated with flour. Spoon the sour cream into the bowl. Using the same fork, mix the sour cream into the butter/flour mixture by pressing the fork down into the sour cream in order to mash the large clumps of sour cream into the flour and butter. As with all pie doughs, don't overwork the dough. After a few turns with the fork, it is easiest to use your hands to pull the dough together. It will look a bit shaggy but as you press it together (quickly and firmly so the the butter pieces don't melt), it should start to form a cohesive ball. If it still seems overly dry, add a teaspoon or so of sour cream at a time until it comes together. It's ok if there are still a few dry spots or cracks in the dough. The mixture should not be overly wet or sticky. At the same time, it shouldn't be falling apart either. It should hold together when pressed.
2. To roll out, lightly flour your countertop and using firm, even strokes, roll from the center outward, turning the dough a quarter turn every few strokes. The less you mess with the dough the better - even rolling - so try not to overwork it. Roll it out to a thin crust as quickly as possible. Roll the dough over the rolling pin and unroll it onto the pie plate. Gently lift up the edges of the pie crust and settle it into the bottom of the pie plate without pressing or smushing. Trim the edges to within 1/4-inch. Fold the short overhang underneath the top edge of the pie plate and crimp all the way around. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes before using.
3. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Peel, core and slice all the apples to about 1/4-inch thick. It doesn't have to be exact - just try to get them all about the same thickness so the apples cook evenly.
4. Toss the apples in a bowl with the lemon juice, sugar, and cinnamon. Scoop the apple mixture into the chilled crust.
5. In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, and cinnamon. Add the butter pieces and cut in with a fork, your fingers or a pastry blender until the mixture is coarsely combined and makes a streusel-like consistency.
6. Lightly press the crumb mixture on top of the apples. Place the pie on a foil-lined baking sheet and bake for 1 hour and 30 minutes until the apples are tender and the crust is golden brown. If the crust edges are getting too dark during the last 30 minutes of baking, you can cover them with foil for the remainder of baking.
7. Serve warm or at room temperature. This pie is divine with a bit of whipped cream or vanilla ice cream.

Chocolate Mousse Cheesecake Pie

Yield: Serves 8

Ingredients

Crust:

24 Oreos, or other chocolate sandwich-type cookie, crushed
5 tablespoons butter, melted

Cheesecake Filling:

8 ounces cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 large egg
1 egg yolk
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup sour cream

Mousse:

1 cup heavy cream, divided
2 egg yolks
1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips
1/4 cup powdered sugar (optional for sweetness)

Ganache:

1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips
4 tablespoons butter
1/4 cup heavy cream
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
1 tablespoon powdered sugar

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F.
2. For the crust, combine the crushed Oreo cookies and the melted butter. Press the mixture into the bottom and up the sides of a deep dish 9-inch pie plate. Refrigerate while you make the filling.
3. For the filling, with a handheld electric mixer or in the bowl of a stand mixer, blend together the softened cream cheese and granulated sugar until smooth. Add the egg, egg yolk, and vanilla and mix until combined. Blend in the sour cream. Spread the filling over the cookie crust and bake for 40-45 minutes, until the edges are set and the center is slightly firm (a little softness is ok but you don't want it to be really jiggly). Remove the pie from the oven and let it cool completely on a wire rack.
4. For the mousse, heat 1/2 cup cream in a small saucepan until just simmering. Place the egg yolks in a small bowl. Whisking vigorously, pour a couple tablespoons of the hot cream into the egg yolks and continue whisking until completely combined. Pour the tempered egg yolks into the saucepan with the remaining hot cream, whisking quickly the whole time, and return the saucepan to medium-low heat, cooking while stirring constantly, until the cream/egg mixture bubbles and thickens, 1-2 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the chocolate chips, whisking until the mixture is smooth and the chocolate is completely melted. If you used a darker chocolate and would like a bit more sweetness, whisk in up to 1/4 cup powdered sugar. Let the mixture cool to room temperature, whisking occasionally to avoid a skin forming across the top. When completely cool, beat the remaining 1/2 cup cream to stiff peaks and gently fold into the completely cooled chocolate mixture. Spread the mousse over the top of the cooled cheesecake pie and refrigerate.

5. While the pie chills, make the ganache by combining the butter and heavy cream in a saucepan over medium heat until the butter is melted and the mixture is simmering. Place the chocolate in a small bowl. Pour the hot cream mixture over the chocolate and stir until glossy and smooth. Stir in the vanilla and powdered sugar. Spread the ganache over the mousse and refrigerate the pie until ready to serve (at least an hour - the pie can be made up to a day in advance).