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# PIE

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## 80+ PIES AND PASTRY DELIGHTS

Global Baker

Dean Brettschneider

Photography by Aaron McLean



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# Introduction

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Like most New Zealanders, I grew up with pies for lunch from the high school tuck shop. I remember that lukewarm, runny minced beef and gravy-like filling encased in a soggy, under-baked, doughy pastry wrapped in a cellophane-sealed bag that was kept in a pie warmer (or heated from frozen in a pie warmer set at 60°C, which is the holding temperature, not the heating temperature!). Sometimes it was still frozen in the middle and usually squashed. Thank goodness for tomato sauce, which we squirted all over it to make it edible!

Another childhood memory is of Mum buying a family pie from the supermarket. What a treat it was unbaked in a large aluminium foil the size of a dinner plate. If I remember correctly, it was called a Mince Family Plate Pie. We would heat the oven up, brush the pie with milk (there was no mention of egg wash) to get a glaze, shove it in the oven, bake it until it looked brown and then serve it with mashed potatoes and boiled minted peas.

Then along came the microwave pie ... funnily enough, in my early days of product development for a national industrial pie maker, I was involved in the science behind making pastry crispy in the microwave. Let's just say thank goodness times have moved on to a point where quality really does matter.

There is nothing more satisfying than eating a piping hot, freshly baked pie, tart, quiche or even sausage roll, out of the kitchen oven, brimming with various fillings enclosed in a buttery pastry. Or one left to cool down slightly and eaten warm, or allowed to fully cool before being decorated with pastry cream, fresh cream, fruits, nuts, dusted with icing sugar or even glazed with an apricot glaze to take it from ordinary to extraordinary.

Pies in many shapes and sizes are made around the globe and are the most-baked product in the home kitchen – the world is full of home bakers making their favourite pies for themselves, families and friends.

Traditional pies, which have been handed down in grandmothers' old recipe books, are popular again. Then there are the new versions with modern twists on the classics, using newly available ingredients and flavour combinations to wake up the taste buds. Pies are even now becoming part of the menu in fine-dining restaurants. The humble pie is coming back with passion.

The pies, tarts, pastries and the 'not-quite-a-pie' pies in this book are mostly based on traditional recipes but have been given that familiar twist, either to the filling combinations or the pastry, that I am known for in my global, new world baking style.

## How to use this book

In the following chapters, and in the Basic Recipes at the back of the book, I take time to unlock quite a few basics on the making and baking of pastry. I can't stress enough that, in order for you to succeed, you need to take the time to read all about the ingredients, the equipment and, most importantly, the basic processes and techniques necessary to make pastries and pies. I would even go so far as to suggest that you keep the book beside your bed for your night-time reading.

Sweet, short and puff pastry are all used in this book – some basic and some innovative, with many flavour twists and combinations. Once the basics are mastered, don't be scared to mix and match the pastries to suit yourself – nothing is set in stone.

When making any of the pastries, I recommend you double or triple the recipe and divide it into smaller batches. ~~Wrap each portion of pastry in plastic wrap and place in the freezer until needed, then~~ just remove from the freezer, thaw and use as described in the recipe. Pastry freezes exceptionally well, so make life easy and think ahead.

And as for the question everyone wants to ask me ... can you use store-bought pastry? The answer is yes, of course, it's your choice – but also it's all part of the experience to make your own!

Happy pie making and baking. Global Baker – Dean Brettschneider [www.globalbaker.com](http://www.globalbaker.com)









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# The History of the Humble Pie





# The Pie in History

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Firstly the question should be asked: what is a pie? The Oxford Dictionary describes it as: ‘A baked food consisting of one or two layers or crusts of pastry with a filling’.

It’s interesting to note that the first recorded use of the word ‘pie’ relating to food was as far back as 1303, and by 1362 the pie was well known and popular as a food medium. But when was the first ‘pie’ reputed to have been made? Let’s take a brief journey back in time.

The pie can be traced back in history to the ancient Egyptians. They were prepared and baked by the Pharaohs’ bakers, who encased fillings in bread dough which was considered a primitive form of pastry dough. These early pies consisted of fillings based on field plants and grains and, if sweetening was required, honey was the key, sought-after ingredient. Even the pie then was considered a delicacy.

It’s widely understood that the Greeks were the first makers of ‘pie pastry’ as such. It was prepared by forming flour and water into a very simple dough, which was in turn wrapped around well-seasoned meats. This pastry encasement served to retain the baking juices within and around the meat fillings. However, this pastry casing was not always intended to be eaten; it served to contain the filling and its varying flavour releases during the baking process.

It is believed that by 100 BC the pie had arrived in Rome. One of the earliest fillings noted by historians was goat’s cheese and honey. Until this period pies had been fully encased by one outer dough piece, and it is thought that the Romans were the first to make pies with a top and bottom layer around the fillings. However, while both forms of encasement allowed for the preparation of very good fillings, due to the properties of the encased chamber concept, the pastry tended to be discarded rather than eaten.

While not having an exact date to go by, in medieval northern Europe a pastry recipe was later developed using fat in the form of lard and/or butter. This improved the eating and handling properties of the pastry. Lard, in particular, gave the pie dough some resilience and shape retention when not baked in a baking pan or high-sided dish. While there is still some uncertainty around this, it is believed actual pastry recipes became available from the middle of the sixteenth century. Some research, however, finds that the first recipe may not have become available until 1596.

Not surprisingly, therefore, in what was and is a very passionate and creative environment and a proud profession, a number of countries lay claim to the creation of the first pie. On record is a Frenchman, Antonin Carême, who during the period of 1784–1833, elevated French pastry-making to an iconic art form that endures today. For example, nowadays one of the recipes for puff pastry production is called ‘The French Method’.

The meat pie has been part of English cuisine since medieval times. Pie fillings in twelfth-century Britain consisted of beef or mutton; these were followed by game birds and domestic poultry. It is documented that in London in 1850 the first ‘eel and pie’ shop was opened. The English claim ownership of the introduction of the steak and kidney filling combination, and the Cornish pasty is also a first belonging to Britain. While not a pie by definition, it is a filling encased in a pastry dough of sorts and is baked free-standing as were the very early pies. (It’s interesting to note that most early research indicates that pies were baked, not cooked: raw fillings, as opposed to precooked fillings, were positioned within the dough and then sealed to cook within the baked casing.)

Small pies are often referred to as tartlets but, back in medieval times, a tartlet was a shallow but large

open pie. Another common term for a pie was a 'coffin' because of the shape of the lidded baking container. ~~'Traps' were pies with no tops. Ancient Egyptian pies were commonly called 'galettes'.~~ The one relatively common theme drawn from all these names is that over generations of pie-baking the shape of the pie has changed very little.

Many early pies had a national or iconic ingredient present in the recipe. For example, the 'Irish Pie' is commonly referred to as the 'steak and Guinness pie', in which part of the filling consists of Guinness Stout, bacon and onions. The pumpkin pie, one of America's iconic pies, was created in 1623. Another American classic is, of course, the apple pie.





A pie is not just about the filling preparation but the methodology employed to brown the pastry – and this is not always achieved by baking it in an oven. An example of this is seen in Latin America, where pies have their own traditional fillings, but can be either baked or fried.



So what of pies Downunder? Early British settlers emigrating to New Zealand and Australia brought the pie into this region of the world where it gained instant popularity because of the easy access to and affordability of mutton, which was a primary pie filling. Apparently this fare was available in the early 1800s in Sydney in particular hotels.

Some years later, in both Sydney and Melbourne, the pie cart hit the scene in the form of the 'Pie Man', who normally set up anywhere there was busy foot traffic. The humble pie even made its mark in the 'halls of power'; for the opening of the Old Parliament House in Australia in 1927, Sargent (a brand name whose pie-making roots can be traced back to 1906) pies were served. Not surprisingly, pie carts then appeared in New Zealand in the 1930s. Anyone who grew up in the 1940s and 1950s experienced the pie cart culture. And who could forget the famed cup of railway tea and pie? The pie cart retained its presence right up until the first sign of competition, when, in 1970, international fast food chains started to arrive, offering alternatives to the humble pie. Brands such as Four 'n' Twenty, Big Ben and Georgie Pie heralded the era of mass pie production.

Today mention is often made of the 'gourmet pie', but when you look at early notes on the preparation of pie fillings, it is clear that the gourmet pie has always been with us in one form or other in that cooks, bakers and pâtisserie chefs have and continue to strive for the ultimate flavour blends. While the art of the encasement may have been refined, and there are many definitions of what constitutes a pastry (rustic or otherwise), a pie is still all about the flavour and the eating properties. One can imagine the Pharaohs were a lot less forgiving about any non-conformance with this.



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# Ingredients





# Basic Ingredients

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## Puff Pastry

There are four basic ingredients used in the manufacture of puff pastry:

- strong flour
- butter or special pastry margarine
- salt
- water.

Often the only other ingredients used are lemon juice or cream of tartar.

## Short and Sweet Pastry

Short and sweet pastries are made using a completely different manufacturing procedure and this is reflected in the ingredients used:

- standard plain flour
- butter or margarine
- salt
- sugar (for sweet pastry)
- egg and/or water.

Other ingredients can include baking powder, cocoa for chocolate sweet pastry and lemon zest or vanilla essence for flavour.



# Basic Ingredient Functions

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**Flour** is important because its protein-forming potential dictates the lift that will be obtained, and because it forms the final structure of the pastry. For both puff and choux pastry, strong flour should be used for its strength and good quality protein (gluten). In the case of short and sweet pastry, a medium or strong flour is suitable. Its high percentage of fat or butter softens and weakens the protein (gluten), allowing the pastry to become more biscuit-like.

**Salt** improves the flavour and has a strengthening effect upon the protein (gluten), which is required for puff and choux pastry.

**Butter or special pastry margarine** has different functions in different pastries.

**Puff Pastry:** Butter or special pastry margarines are used in the dough stage to make the dough softer and easier to handle. It also makes the finished pastry more tender and shorter to eat. Butter or special pastry margarines are used to separate the layers of dough and influence the lift of the pastry and also have an effect on the eating quality of the baked pastry. This butter or special pastry margarine is often referred to as the layering fat. The amount of layering fat varies from 50—100 per cent based on the flour weight.

In commercial terms, we usually define the type of pastry made by the amount of layering fat used:

- Half puff pastry: 50 per cent of layering fat based on flour weight.
- Three-quarter puff pastry: 75 per cent of layering fat based on flour weight.
- Full puff pastry: 100 per cent of layering fat based on flour weight.

**Short and Sweet Pastry:** Butter or special pastry margarines are used to shorten and weaken the protein (gluten), allowing the pastry to be more biscuit-like in texture, similar to shortbread.

**Water** is largely required to obtain the correct consistency of the dough. Water also hydrates the protein (gluten) and allows it to become elastic and extensible. The amount used depends upon the absorption rate of the flour, the amount of fat used in the dough and the process used.

**Sugar** is mainly used in the manufacture of sweet pastry, which requires a sweeter tasting finished product. Sugar in conjunction with butter has a softening and shortening effect on the protein (gluten). The higher the sugar percentage, the crispier and more biscuit-like the sweet pastry will be. Caster sugar is always used to ensure the sugar crystals dissolve.

**Eggs** are generally not used in the manufacture of puff pastry, but are essential in sweet pastry. In sweet pastry, eggs are mainly used to enrich the dough for quality. Eggs also improve the handling qualities of sweet pastry when thinly rolling and pressing it into tart moulds, etc.

**Baking powder** adds lightness and apparent shortness to sweet pastry. In top quality sweet pastry this is not necessary.

**Cream of tartar and lemon juice** are both acids which have a toughening but mellowing effect on the protein (gluten), allowing extensibility when rolling out the pastry, resulting in improved volume. If using either one of these acids, ensure you do not use an excessive amount, as this will turn your puff pastry sour and result in a low volume. If using good quality flour, the addition of acid is not required.

**Spices** may be added to all pastries, mainly to contribute to the taste and flavour and also to change the colour. If used in excess, they can leave an undesirable taste when eating.

**Herbs**, both dried and fresh, can be added to all styles of pastry and the choice is only dependent on

whether they are sweet or savoury influenced. Experimenting is the key, as there are no general rules for how much to add other than personal preference.

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**Nuts** can be added to pastry. Almonds and hazelnuts are the most commonly used nuts, especially in sweet and short pastry. When nuts are added to the flour component they are ground first into a powder (sometimes called a meal). If left whole, nuts will cause holes in the pastry. Sliced nuts or nibs are often used post-baking or as decoration. Nuts also form many fillings that are used in tarts, such as frangipane (or almond cream).

**Grains and seeds** are a great way to get some health into your indulgence. They also have a feel-good factor. When adding grains, you may need to allow for additional water as many grains are dried and tend to take up the water in the dough which is actually needed to make the dough easy to work with. Therefore it is advisable to soak dried grains in half their weight of water for at least two hours before adding them to the other ingredients. Seeds, on the other hand, don't require pre-soaking. Both grains and seeds are used for flavour and in particular provide a rustic, earthy nuttiness to the pastry. They can also be used as toppings before and after baking.



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# Equipment









## Your Hands

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These are the two most important pieces of equipment that you have in your 'tool box'. Your hands must be strong and firm, yet gentle and sensitive; able to feel when the dough is fully mixed, elastic and at the same time smooth and silky to the touch; as well as being light and delicate enough to gently fold and lift the softest of flours through a perfectly aerated batter.

You need to have a good feeling for temperature and consistency when using your hands. By making the same recipe more than once, you will develop the 'baker's feel' and know when it feels right to stop folding the flour into your delicate, light-as-air sponge or when to put the loaf of bread in the oven, not to mention being able to tell if your product is under-baked, perfectly baked or over-baked.

I often see people working with scrapers, mixers, spoons and knives, too scared to touch the dough or batter because they will get messy and dirty. Go on, get right in there, and don't underestimate the value of using your hands in baking!

## Scales

As with all recipes, the more accurately you measure the more chance you have of gaining perfect results. A good set of digital scales is one of the best pieces of cooking and baking equipment you can have. Treat them well and you will have them for many, many years. I recommend digital scales with one-gram increments.

## Sieves

When combining dry ingredients it's best to sift them together in a large mixing bowl to ensure even distribution. This is particularly important when using raising agents, such as baking powder and baking soda, and spices and cocoa powders. Always have on hand a small fine sieve that you can use to dust icing sugar on top of baked pies and tarts for decorative effect.

## Mixing Bowls

There is nothing more frustrating than trying to mix your ingredients in a mixing bowl that is too small. Always have on hand a range of mixing bowls from very large to small.

## Pie-baking Tins, Tartlet Moulds and Flan Cases

Have on hand a range of pie dishes at different sizes and height, from individual pies to large family ones to suit every occasion. You can get a great range of both domestic and professional pie tins, tart moulds and flan cases today in speciality kitchen stores. Don't discount mini and standard muffin pans as they make great individual pies – and a 20cm round high-sided cake tin is perfect for that deep-dish pie. Do try to purchase Teflon-lined tins as these really make life easy, but take care not to scratch the surface when washing them.

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