

Skillet Apple Pie/Pandowdy

Why This Recipe Works

Apple pandowdy harks back to Colonial-era New England—the dessert takes a more rustic approach to apple pie in that it features just one pastry crust, placed on top of a lightly sweetened apple filling. During or after baking, the pastry is broken and pushed into the filling—a technique known as “dowdying.” We found the idea of an easier approach to apple pie very appealing—no fussy crimping and only one piece of pastry dough to roll out, so we set out to make our own version—one with a flaky crust and tender, juicy apples.

For a juicy apple filling with bright fruit flavor, we added cider to the apples and sweetened the filling with maple syrup—the tart intensity of the cider deepened the apple flavor and maple syrup’s rich character added the right degree of sweetness. Both additions also made for a pleasantly saucy filling. Parcooking the apples in a skillet until caramelized before adding the other ingredients helped to deepen their flavor. For the crust, we cut a standard pie crust into squares after rolling it over the fruit right in the skillet—this encouraged a multitude of crispy edges that contrast nicely with the tender fruit and recall (in a less dowdy way) the broken-up crusts of a traditional pandowdy.

Recipe: Skillet Apple Pie

Serves 6 to 8

If your skillet is not oven-safe, precook the apples and stir in the cider mixture as instructed, then transfer the apples to a 13 by 9-inch baking dish. Roll out the dough to a 13 by 9-inch rectangle and cut the crust and bake the pandowdy as instructed. If you do not have apple cider, reduced apple juice may be used as a substitute; simmer 1 cup apple juice in a small saucepan over medium heat until reduced to 1/2 cup (about 10 minutes). Serve the pandowdy warm or at room temperature with vanilla ice cream or whipped cream. Use a combination of sweet, crisp apples such as Golden Delicious and firm, tart apples such as Cortland or Empire.

Crust

- 1 cup (5 ounces) unbleached all-purpose flour, plus extra for the work surface
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon table salt
- 2 tablespoons vegetable shortening, chilled
- 6 tablespoons (3/4 stick) unsalted butter, cut into 1/4-inch pieces and chilled
- 3–4 tablespoons ice water

Filling

- 1/2 cup apple cider
- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons juice from 1 lemon
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon (optional)
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 1/2 pounds sweet and tart apples (about 4 large), peeled, cored, and cut into 1/2-inch-thick wedges (see note)
- 1 large egg white, lightly beaten
- 2 teaspoons sugar

1. For the crust: Pulse the flour, sugar, and salt in a food processor until combined, about 4 pulses. Add the shortening and pulse until the mixture has the texture of coarse sand, about 10 pulses. Sprinkle the butter pieces over the flour mixture and pulse until the mixture is pale yellow and resembles coarse crumbs, with the butter bits no larger than small peas, about 10 pulses. Transfer the mixture to a medium bowl.
2. Sprinkle 3 tablespoons of the ice water over the mixture. With a rubber spatula, use a folding motion to mix, pressing down on the dough until the dough is slightly tacky and sticks together, adding up to 1 tablespoon more ice water if the dough does not come together. Flatten the dough into a 4-inch disk. Wrap the disk in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 1 hour or up to 2 days. Let the dough stand at room temperature for 15 minutes before rolling.
3. For the filling: Adjust an oven rack to the upper-middle position (between 7 and 9 inches from the heating element) and heat the oven to 500 degrees. Whisk the cider, syrup, lemon juice, cornstarch, and cinnamon (if using) together in a medium bowl until smooth. Melt the butter in a 12-inch oven-safe skillet over medium-high heat. Add the apples and cook, stirring two or three times, until the apples begin to caramelize, about 5 minutes. (Do not fully cook the apples.) Remove the pan from the heat, add the cider mixture, and gently stir until the apples are well coated. Set aside to cool slightly.
4. To assemble and bake: Roll the dough out on a lightly floured work surface to an 11-inch circle. Roll the dough loosely around the rolling pin and unroll over the apple filling. Brush the dough with the egg white and sprinkle with the sugar. With a sharp knife, gently cut the dough into six pieces by making one vertical cut followed by two evenly spaced horizontal cuts (perpendicular to the first cut). Bake until the apples are tender and the crust is a deep golden brown, about 20 minutes, rotating the skillet halfway through the baking time. Cool for 15 minutes and serve.