

Pie Crust

- 2-1/2 cups all-purpose flour, plus lots more
- 1 teaspoon white sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 12 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1-ounce ice cube
- 1 ounce water
- 2 ounces vodka

The day before making pies, separate the ingredients into different containers to put into the refrigerator, so that everything is nice and chilled and ready to make crust. The first bag contains 1-1/2 cups of all-purpose flour, 1 teaspoon of white sugar and 1/2 a teaspoon of salt. The second bag contains 1/2 cup of shortening and 12 tablespoons of unsalted butter, cut into small pieces. The third bag contains one more cup of flour. Finally, a watertight container has a 1-ounce ice cube, 1 ounce of cold water, and 2 ounces of vodka. Store all of these ingredients in the refrigerator until well-chilled.

Sift the first bag (1-1/2 cups flour, sugar, salt) into a mixing bowl. Fluff and stir with a fork. Add the second bag (shortening and butter), cutting in with the fork and using your hands to mix in large clumps of the fat. Sift the third bag (1 cup of flour) into the bowl, and fold in, continuing to cut with the fork, until the dough breaks up into pea-sized pieces.

One tablespoon at a time, add in the ice water and vodka mixture, gently folding and stirring in with a fork. Do this until you have used all of the ice water and vodka. Gently roll the dough into a ball, using as little contact as possible, and divide the dough into two balls. Place each ball of dough in separate plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least an hour.

When you are actually ready to use the dough, thoroughly dust your rolling surface. Dust your hands, your rolling pin and one ball of dough with the flour before you start to roll the dough. Roll the dough from the center. As you work, gently lift the dough so that it doesn't tear or stick to the table. Gently lay the bottom crust into your pie plate, and flatten into the plate gently with your fingers. Trim excess dough from the sides of the pie with a sharp knife.

After you have placed your pie filling into the pie, you can roll out the second ball to make your top layer (or you can make two single-crust pies). If you do make a top crust, remember to vent it with strategic knife cuts.

Preparation time: 40 minutes, start a day in advance

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