

Salt and Serenity

Cheddar Apple Hand Pies

Makes 6-8 pies*

The Flaky Pie Dough Recipe is the clever creation of Stella Park, over at seriouseat.com. It is simple to make and results in the least temperamental and most delicious pastry dough I have ever tried. I have made it with both salted and unsalted butter. I omit the salt when I use salted butter.

*This recipe makes 6 hand pies if you decide to make the decorative braided border. If this detail is too fussy for you, then you will have enough dough to make 8 pies. I give instructions for both options below.

Flaky Pie Dough

8 ounces all-purpose flour (1 $\frac{2}{3}$ cups; 225g), plus more for dusting

$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce sugar (1 tablespoon; 15g)

1 teaspoon (4g) Diamond Crystal kosher salt; for table salt, use half as much by volume or use the same weight

8 ounces unsalted butter (2 sticks; 225g), cold

4 ounces cold tap water ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup; 115g)

Apple Pie Filling

2 large apples (14 ounces; 397grams), peeled, cored and diced into $\frac{1}{4}$ inch dice (I like Honeycrisp apples for this)

2 Tablespoons brown sugar

1 tablespoon ground cinnamon

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon kosher salt

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup shredded old cheddar cheese (3 ounces; 85 grams)

Assembly

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup room temperature water

3 large egg yolks, whisked

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup coarse sanding sugar or turbinado sugar

1. **For the Dough:** Whisk flour, sugar, and salt together in a medium bowl. Cut butter into 1/2-inch cubes (this size is important, as smaller pieces will melt too fast) and toss with flour mixture to break up the pieces. With your fingertips, smash each cube flat—that's it! No rubbing or cutting. Stir in water, then knead dough against the sides of the bowl until it comes together in a shaggy ball. Dough temperature should register between 65 and 70°F (18 and 21°C); if not, refrigerate briefly before rolling and folding.
2. **Make the Layers:** On a generously floured work surface, roll dough into a roughly 10x15-inch rectangle. Fold the 10-inch sides to the center, then close the newly formed packet like a book. Fold in half once more, bringing the short sides together to create a thick block. Divide in half with a sharp knife or bench

scraper. Dough temperature should still be somewhere between 65 and 70°F (18 and 21°C); if not, refrigerate briefly before proceeding.

3. Using as much flour as needed, roll one piece into a 14-inch circle. Dust off excess flour with a pastry brush. Transfer dough to a parchment lined baking sheet. Repeat with remaining dough. Chill dough for about 15 minutes in fridge. Dough can be made ahead and stored in fridge, wrapped well in plastic, overnight if you'd like to do this step the day before.
4. While dough is chilling, mix diced apples, brown sugar, cinnamon and salt together in a medium sized bowl. Preheat oven to 375°F. If you are making the fancy braided border, follow steps 5-8. If you are just sealing the pies without decorative border, skip down to step 9.
5. **If you are making a braided border:** Cut out 12 4-inch circles of dough and place 6 on each baking sheet. If you don't have a 4 inch round cutter, just use a little plate that is approximately 4 inches and use a paring knife to cut out the circles. Cut an x or little circle in the center of 6 pastry rounds. These will be the tops. Chill dough rounds while you make the braided borders. Preheat oven to 375°F.
6. Take the dough scraps and roll them into a ball and chill for about 15 minutes. Roll dough into an approximate 12x6 inch rectangle. Place dough on cutting board and using a ruler and a sharp knife or pizza cutter, cut dough into ¼-inch wide x 12-inch long strips. You will need 18 strips. Form 6 braids using 3 strands per braid.
7. Remove dough rounds from fridge. Spoon about ¼ cup apples into the center of each of the 6 bottom rounds (the ones without the holes or x's). Try to leave a ½ inch border; you may need to use your fingers to pile the apples into the center. Top each mound of apples with a big pinch of cheddar cheese. Dip your finger into the ¼ cup of water and moisten the rim of each pie. This will act as the glue to seal the pies.
8. Cover each mound with a top circle. Gently press on the border to seal. Brush pies with egg yolk. Top the border of each pie with a braid. Brush braids with egg yolk. Sprinkle pies with turbinado sugar. Bake for 30-45 minutes, until deeply golden brown. Let cool for 15 minutes before eating. Serve warm.
9. **If you are not making a braided border:** Cut out 16 4-inch circles of dough and place 8 on each baking sheet. If you don't have a 4 inch round cutter, just use a little plate that is approximately 4 inches and use a paring knife to cut out the circles. Cut an x or little circle in the center of 8 pastry rounds. These will be the tops. You may have to roll the scraps of dough to make enough rounds.

10. Spoon about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup apples into the center of each of the 8 bottom rounds (the ones without the holes or x's). Try to leave a $\frac{1}{2}$ inch border; you may need to use your fingers to pile the apples into the center. Top each mound of apples with a big pinch of cheddar cheese. Dip your finger into the $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water and moisten the rim of each pie. This will act as the glue to seal the pies.
11. Cover each mound with a top circle. Gently press on the border to seal. Brush pies with egg yolk. Sprinkle pies with turbinado sugar.
12. Bake pies for 30-35 minutes, until deeply golden brown. Let cool for at least 15 minutes if you don't want to burn the roof of your mouth. Serve warm.

Any leftover pastries will keep for up to 3 days, in an airtight container, in the fridge. Just bake at 375° for 5-7 minutes to reheat.