Basic Fruit Pie

Make-ahead · Serves a crowd · Serves 8 (one 9-inch pie)

Ken's note: TBD

The blueberry-lemon filling was good.

Use the All-Butter Pie Crust. Keep the sugar low so the fruit is the star — taste the fruit and add a spoonful more only if it's very tart. A cooked apple pie filling works here too, but cut its sugar at least in half; as written it uses a full cup.

Ingredients

Filling (apple, as the lead)

- 5½–6 cups peeled, sliced apples (about 2–2½ lb; Granny Smith, Honeycrisp, or a mix)
- 1–2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
- ¼ cup packed brown sugar, or up to ⅓ cup if the apples are tart
- 2 Tbsp cornstarch, or 3 Tbsp flour
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- A pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
- A pinch of salt
- 1 Tbsp unsalted butter, diced (optional)
- 1 Tbsp milk or cream, and a pinch of sugar, for the top (optional)

Method

1. Heat the oven to 425°F with a sheet pan on the middle rack. Toss the apples with the lemon juice, brown sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt.
2. Roll out the bottom crust and line a 9-inch pie plate. Fill, dot with the butter if using, and add the top crust (or a lattice). Seal and crimp, cut a few vents, and brush with milk if you want a little color — skip the sugar on top, or use the barest pinch.
3. Bake on the hot sheet 20 minutes, then turn the oven down to 375°F and bake 35–45 minutes more, until the juices bubble thickly in the center and the crust is deep golden. Tent with foil if the crust browns too fast. Cool at least 2–3 hours so the filling sets.
4. **Blueberry-lemon** (Thanksgiving 2026; a 9-inch deep-dish pie). Frozen blueberries are fine — thaw and drain them first. Don't over-fill the crust. Brush with egg wash and sprinkle pearl sugar. The Thanksgiving batch used ¾ cup sugar; start at ½ cup and add a spoonful only if the berries are tart.
5. Mix the filling immediately before it goes into the crust. Don't over-fill. Lattice, crimp, brush with egg wash, and sprinkle with pearl sugar. Bake on a rimmed sheet 15 minutes at 425°F, then 45–60 minutes at 350°F, until the crust is golden and thick juices bubble in the center. Shield the rim if it browns too fast. Cool at least 4 hours.
6. **Cherry** (also a 9-inch deep-dish pie). Sour cherries are preferred, so look for them. Sweet cherries (frozen are fine) are the fallback; use less sugar and a little more lemon so they don't eat flat. Cook the filling and cool it completely before it meets the pastry.
7. **Sour cherry** (the lead). 2½ lb pitted sour cherries (thawed and drained if frozen, with a splash of their juice if they seem dry); ⅔ cup sugar, or a spoonful more if they're very tart; ¼ cup cornstarch; 1–2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice; ¼ tsp fine salt; 1 Tbsp unsalted butter.
8. **Sweet cherry** (the fallback). 2½ lb pitted sweet cherries, thawed if frozen, juices retained; ½ cup sugar (the Thanksgiving batch used ⅔ cup); ¼ cup cornstarch; 2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice, total; ¼ tsp fine salt; 1 Tbsp unsalted butter.
9. Heat the cherries, sugar, lemon juice, and salt until juicy. Stir the cornstarch with 3 Tbsp cool water, stir the slurry again, and add it. Bring to a bubbling simmer 1–2 minutes, stirring gently. Off the heat, add the butter. Taste a cooled spoonful and adjust the sugar or lemon. Spread in a shallow container and refrigerate until completely cold.
10. Lattice and crimp with cold pastry, brush with egg wash, and sprinkle with pearl sugar. Bake 15 minutes at 425°F, then 40–55 minutes at 350°F, until golden and bubbling in the center. Cool at least 4 hours. If the filling isn't cold yet, wait; don't warm the dough.
11. **Other variations** (same thickener and the same idea on sugar — start low):

Notes

- 7 cups (about 1 kg) blueberries, thawed and drained if frozen
- ½ cup sugar
- ¼ cup cornstarch
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
- ¼ tsp salt
- **Apple:** as above. A mix of tart and sweet apples is best.
- **Mixed berry:** 5–6 cups blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, and/or strawberries; they’re juicier, so don’t skimp on the cornstarch. A little lemon zest is good. Thaw and drain if frozen, and don’t over-fill.
- **Peach:** sliced peeled peaches; ripe ones may need even less sugar.
- **Peach-berry or apple-cranberry:** mix as you like; cranberries are tart, so taste and adjust.