

Vanilla Cream Pie

1 recipe Baked Pastry Shell
4 egg yolks
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cornstarch
2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups half-and-half, light cream, or milk
1 tablespoon butter or margarine
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla extract



Prepare Baked Pastry Shell. Separate egg yolks from whites.

To make the filling, in a medium saucepan combine sugar and cornstarch, make sure they are mixed well. Gradually stir in half-and-half. Cook and stir over medium-high heat until thickened and bubbly; reduce heat. Cook and stir for 2 minutes more. Remove from heat.

Slightly beat egg yolks. Gradually stir about 1 cup of the hot filling into yolks. Add egg yolk mixture to filling in saucepan. Bring to a gentle boil; reduce heat. Cook and stir for 2 minutes more. Remove from heat. Stir in butter and vanilla. Keep filling warm.

Pour warm filling into Baked Pastry Shell. Bake in a 325 oven for 30 minutes. Cool on a wire rack in 1 hour. Chill 3-6 hours before serving. Cover for longer storage.

Top the chilled pie with whipped cream.

WHIPPED CREAM

1 cup heavy cream, chilled
1 tbsp. sugar
1 tsp. vanilla extract

Whip all ingredients together with an electric mixer (whisk attachment) in a chilled metal bowl on low speed until it is frothy and sugar has dissolved, about 1 minute. Increase speed to high and continue to whip until doubled in volume and soft peaks form, 1-3 minutes. Don't overwhip!

Variations

Coconut Cream Pie: Stir in 1 cup flaked coconut with butter and vanilla.

Banana Cream Pie: Prepare as above, except before adding filling, arrange 3 medium bananas, sliced (about 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups), over bottom of shell.

Dark Chocolate Cream Pie: Increase sugar to 1 cup. Stir in 3 ounces chopped unsweetened chocolate with the half-and half.

Baked Pastry Shell

Ingredients:

1 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
¼ teaspoon salt
1/3 cup shortening
4-5 tablespoons cold water

Directions:

In a medium bowl stir together flour and salt. Using a pastry blender, cut in shortening until pieces are pea-size. Bits of shortening held apart by flour contribute to a tender and flaky crust.

Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of ice cold water over part of the flour mixture; gently toss with a fork. Push moistened dough to the side of the bowl. Repeat moistening flour mixture, using 1 tablespoon of the water at a time, until all the flour mixture is moistened. Form dough in a ball, handling as little as possible to avoid developing gluten and melting the shortening.

On a lightly floured surface, use your hands to slightly flatten dough. Roll dough from center to edges in a circle about 12 inches in diameter.

To transfer pastry, fold in fourths and unfold into a 9-inch pie plate. Ease pastry into pie plate without stretching it.

Trim pastry to ½ inch beyond edge of pie plate. Fold under extra pastry. Crimp edge if desired. Prick bottom and sides of pastry with a fork so it does not puff up while baking. Line pastry with a double thickness of foil to help crust keep its shape. Bake in a 450F oven for 8 minutes. Remove foil. Bake 5-6 minutes more or until golden. Cool on a wire rack.

