

NOVEMBER

Pecan Hand Pies

For our latest lesson of the Better Baking Academy with Bob's Red Mill, we're offering the dreamiest Pecan Hand Pies with the flakiest pastry dough imaginable. Traditional puff pastry, *pâte feuilletée*, is made by rolling, folding, and chilling dough repeatedly, creating layers upon layers of butter and dough. As the layers of cold butter hit the heat of the oven, steam causes the dough to puff, creating the iconic buttery flakiness of pastries such as palmiers. But there's an easier, faster way to achieve this delicious layering: rough puff pastry. Cutting down on time and energy but not on layers of lamination, our no-fuss recipe uses Bob's Red Mill Organic All-Purpose Flour, a flour that is soft enough to keep things tender but robust enough to handle multiple letter folds and rollouts. Get ready for a recipe that'll blow away all your buttery expectations.



INGREDIENT BREAKDOWN

Great recipes require great ingredients. Here's how each one helps pull together a flakey, buttery hand pie dough.

BOB'S RED MILL ORGANIC ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR: Dough that needs to be laminated requires a special kind of flour. Too low in protein, like cake or pastry flour, and the dough will not develop enough gluten to hold and maintain its laminated layers. Too high in protein, like bread flour, and the end result will be too tough. Bob's Red Mill Organic All-Purpose Flour offers the strength needed while still allowing the dough to bake into a melt-in-your mouth pastry.

UNSALTED BUTTER: Butter is the defining flavor of this dough, so spring for a milk fat-rich European-style butter, which has more fat than the generic grocery store butter. As for unsalted versus salted—salt content can vary across different brands of butter, so we use unsalted butter, which allows us to add the exact amount of kosher salt desired.

KOSHER SALT: Salt is the all-encompassing flavor booster, and piecrusts without salt tend to taste flat. Salt also plays its part in gluten formation by strengthening interactions between gluten molecules, giving the dough more structure. We like kosher salt because it is a pure, mined, additive-free salt that has a crisp, clean taste. Furthermore, it is flaked rather than granulated, which allows for more even distribution.

WATER: Two factors regarding water can make or break your rough puff dough: temperature and the amount used. Ice water keeps butter firm and prevents it from melting into the dough, which leads to flakiness. Tenderness comes from limiting the amount of water used to hydrate the dough.

EGG: We use egg both to help seal our hand pie layers together and to create an egg wash for a shiny, golden crust.

GRANULATED SUGAR: A sprinkling of sugar on top adds a touch of sweetness to our dough, as well as a welcome note of crunch.





PECAN HAND PIES

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Makes 12 hand pies

These hand pies are exceptional for a number of reasons. First, they're loaded with a gooey Pecan Pie Filling that reminds you of a sweet, melted praline. Second, the rough puff dough is a snap to pull together but still lusciously laminated. Third, the pies are perfectly portioned and portable. This is the Thanksgiving dessert you've been waiting for.

- 1⅓ cups (377 grams) cold unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch cubes
- 3 cups (375 grams) Bob's Red Mill Organic All-Purpose Flour
- 1 tablespoon (9 grams) kosher salt
- ⅔ cup (160 grams) ice water
- Pecan Pie Filling (recipe follows)
- 1 large egg (50 grams), lightly beaten
- 1½ tablespoons (18 grams) granulated sugar

1. Freeze butter until firm, 15 to 20 minutes.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat cold butter, flour, and salt at low speed just until butter is coated with flour. With mixer on low speed, add ⅔ cup (160 grams) ice water in a slow, steady stream, beating just until dough comes together, about 1 minute, stopping to scrape sides of bowl and turn dough to help dough hydrate evenly. (There will still be large pieces of butter. It is OK if a few dry bits remain). Turn out onto a lightly floured surface, and roll into a 9-inch square. Wrap in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 45 minutes to 1 hour.

3. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into an 18x10-inch rectangle, lightly flouring surface and top of dough as needed; fold dough in thirds, like a letter. Rotate dough 90 degrees; roll into an 18x10-inch rectangle, and fold into thirds, like a letter. Repeat procedure once more. Wrap dough in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

4. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

5. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into an 18½x16½-inch rectangle (about ⅛ inch thick). Trim edges to create an 18x16-inch rectangle. Cut into 24 (4x3-inch) rectangles. Place flat on prepared pan, and freeze until firm.

6. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Place 12 rectangles at least 1 inch apart on prepared pans. Spread 1½ tablespoons (33 grams) Pecan Pie Filling onto rectangles, leaving a ¼- to ½-inch border around edges. Brush all edges of dough with egg; top with remaining rectangles. Using the tines of a fork dipped in flour, seal edges. (Remove from pan to seal edges if it is easier to work with). Freeze until firm, 5 to 10 minutes.

7. Brush tops of dough with egg; sprinkle with sugar. Using a paring knife, cut a small "X" in top of dough.

8. Bake until sides look dry and tops and bottoms are deep golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes. Let cool on pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool on a wire rack. Serve warm or at room temperature.

PECAN PIE FILLING

Makes 1¼ cups

- 1 cup (220 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar
- 1 cup (113 grams) pecan pieces, toasted
- ¼ cup (57 grams) unsalted butter, melted
- 2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt

1. In a medium bowl, stir together all ingredients until well combined.



MIXING



1. Freeze butter until firm, 15 to 20 minutes. At every step of this rough puff and hand pie process, your butter should be cold. Even before mixing, make sure you've got firm, cold butter going into the stand mixer. You want this butter to stay slightly chunky, and if you start with softened or room temperature butter, it'll smooth out into a homogenous spread.

MIXING



2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat cold butter, flour, and salt at low speed just until butter is coated with flour. This mixing time should go by in a flash—15 to 30 seconds! You just want each butter piece coated, not cut up in any way.



3. With mixer on low speed, add $\frac{2}{3}$ cup (160 grams) ice water in a slow, steady stream, beating just until dough comes together, about 1 minute, stopping to scrape sides of bowl and turn dough to help dough hydrate evenly. (There will still be large pieces of butter. It is OK if a few dry bits remain). Pie dough and rough puff dough need just enough hydration to come together, and pouring in a slow, steady stream helps ensure you're monitoring the changing texture of your dough. Try to make sure no ice cubes fall into the dough, as that extra water could take your mixture from doughy to pasty.

MIXING



4. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface, and roll into a 9-inch square. Wrap in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Our mixing was intentionally light to make sure our dough doesn't develop gluten or break down the butter in too small of pieces, so your dough may seem a bit dry when you put it on your work surface. Don't worry, though. Forming the dough into a compact 9-inch square helps you knead together the pieces. Your hands are more thorough (and more gentle) than continued mixing in the stand mixer.

LETTER FOLD



On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into an 18x10-inch rectangle, lightly flouring surface and top of dough as needed; fold dough in thirds, like a letter. Folding the dough like a letter stacks the pieces of butter within the dough. This repeated stacking creates layers of butter, allowing for the signature “puff” when the butter steams in the oven.



Rotate dough 90 degrees; roll into an 18x10-inch rectangle, and fold into thirds, like a letter. Repeat procedure once more. Wrap dough in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour. You will fold the dough into thirds a total of 3 times. If at any point the butter is too soft after a fold, wrap in plastic wrap, and freeze until butter is firm again, checking every 5 minutes. However, if you place it in the freezer during the folds, make sure you keep an eye on it. If it gets too cold, the dough could crack as you roll it out.

MAKING HAND PIE SQUARES



On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into an $18\frac{1}{2} \times 16\frac{1}{2}$ -inch rectangle (about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick). Trim edges to create an 18x16-inch rectangle. Cut into 24 (4x3-inch) rectangles. Place flat on prepared pan, and freeze until firm. To create 24 (4x3-inch) rectangles, you'll be cutting 3-inch wide columns on the 18-inch side, and 4-inch-long rows on the 16-inch side. If all do not fit on one pan, cover the first layer with parchment paper, and stack a second layer on top. No need to get a second pan. By the way, now is the perfect time to make your filling while you wait for your rectangles to set back up.

FILLING



Place 12 rectangles at least 1 inch apart on prepared pans. Spread $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons (33 grams) Pecan Pie Filling onto rectangles, leaving a $\frac{1}{4}$ - to $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch border around edges. Brush all edges of dough with egg; top with remaining rectangles. To keep this process from getting sticky, try using a $\frac{1}{2}$ -tablespoon spring-loaded scoop to portion out the filling.

CRIMPING



Using the tines of a fork dipped in flour, seal edges. (Remove from pan to seal edges if it is easier to work with). Freeze until firm, 5 to 10 minutes. To make sure the edges are well-sealed so they don't leak, be firm with your fork. If you find that the two sheets of dough aren't meeting up evenly, use a pastry wheel to trim the edges.

EGG WASH AND SCORING



Brush tops of dough with egg; sprinkle with sugar. Using a paring knife, cut a small “X” in top of dough. The egg wash will give the pastry color and shine, and the sugar adds a touch of crunch. The “X” cut acts as a vent for our wet filling, allowing steam to release from the pie without bursting, so be sure to cut completely through the dough.

BAKING



Bake until sides look dry and tops and bottoms are deep golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes. Let cool on pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool on a wire rack. Serve warm or at room temperature. Properly sealed and crimped pies shouldn't leak any filling, but in case one or two have some leaks, be careful moving the pies to a cooling rack. That melted sugar filling is hot!

MAKE AHEAD

FREEZE YOUR DOUGH

This rough puff dough will keep in the freezer for up to 3 months, so you can be ready to make these pies at a moment's notice. Proceed with the recipe through step 5, wrap the dough rectangles tightly in plastic wrap, and freeze in an airtight container. Be sure to let it stand at room temperature until it becomes pliable enough for rolling out.

