There are three basic ingredients in a pie crust: fat, flour, and liquid. You can come up with numerous variations just by changing your basic ingredients and their ratios. Check out favorite recipes for the Perfect Pie Crust.

**Cold ingredients and limited handling are the key to preparing a wonderful pie crust.**

The colder the better. All ingredients (even the flour) should be ice cold before mixing. It is especially important for the fat you are using (butter, lard, and/or vegetable shortening) to be very cold. Professionals say pie dough should never get warmer than 60 degrees F. If you are making the dough in a food processor you can even freeze the fat before using it.

**Fats:** The type of fat you use will affect flavor and flakiness, while the amount affects tenderness. Flaky crusts result when bits of unmelted fat are layered between layers of flour and melt away with baking. They can be made from a variety of solid fats such as butter, vegetable shortening, and lard. Check out Pie Crust Recipes using various types of fat. Butter, lard, and vegetable shortening must be chilled prior to use. If it is too warm, the flour will absorb too much of the fat and produce a tough crust. If using butter or margarine, cut into small pieces prior to adding to the flour.

**Tip:** Cut the butter into small (about 3/4 inch) cubes. Wrap in plastic wrap and freeze until frozen solid, at least 30 minutes. Butter Tip: Shred the frozen butter into the flour with a cheese grater.

**Liquids:** For a tender crust, you want just enough liquid to moisten the flour without drenching it. Liquids should be well chilled (actually liquids should be ice cold). The mixing, after water is added, is critical in making a pie dough - water should be added gradually to the dry ingredients and not all at once. Mix by hand with your fingers or a pastry blender. Use a minimum amount of liquid and handle the dough as little as possible. Overworking the dough will make it tough. NOTE: If too much water is added, the dough will have to be mixed with more flour thus becoming overworked and tough. If too little water is added, it will cause a dry crumbly dough with poor handling qualities.

**Tip:** You can use the pinch test to see if your dough has the right amount of liquid. Pick up a small clump of dough and gently squeeze between your fingers. When the dough just sticks together with small dry cracks, your dough is perfect.

**Flour:** To promote tenderness in your pie crust, choose a low protein wheat flour such as cake flour or pastry flour. All-purpose flour is readily available and works well for pie crusts. Unbleached flour is more tender. Always sift the flour before measuring it. In fact, all dry ingredients need to be sifted together.

**Pastry-Type Flour:** To make a pastry-type flour from all-purpose flour, place 1 tablespoon of cornstarch or other non-gluten flour in the bottom of the measuring cup for every cup of flour you measure. If you want to use a whole grain flour to make pie crust, allow extra time. You will have a much more tender crust if you refrigerate the pie dough overnight before baking to allow the bran to rehydrate thoroughly.
Perfect Pie Hints and Tips:

1. If you roll out the dough on wax paper or parchment paper, it makes cleanup easier. To keep wax paper from slipping, sprinkle a few drops of water on the countertop before arranging the paper. When rolling dough out, always start from the center and work your way out in all directions. Use a heavy rolling pin for rolling piecrust.

2. **Pyrex glass pie plates** are the best choice for baking your pies, as this type of pie pan conducts heat evenly, which allows the bottom crust of the pie to bake thoroughly. Also you can see when the bottom crust of your pie is browned. If using a glass pie plate, reduce the oven temperature by 25 degrees. Do not oil or grease pie plates. Thin, aluminum pie pans are a poor choice because they cook unevenly. If you have to use them, double them up and use two. Dull metal pie plates are better then shiny metal pans for making pies. The shiny metal pans keep the crust from browning properly.

3. Hints to prevent bottom crust from getting soggy:
   - **Always chill pastry dough** before rolling and cutting. Chill it again rolling and before baking, to further relax the gluten.
   - Refrigerate the dough (in the pie plate) for 15 minutes before adding the filling.
   - If pie has only a bottom crust, you can blind-bake (see #4 below) the crust and then moisture-proof it. You can brush it with a bit of egg white two or three minutes after it comes out of the oven.
   - A good way to keep pie crust from becoming soggy is to sprinkle it with a mixture of equal parts sugar and flour before adding filling.
   - Another way is to brush the unbaked bottom crust of a pie with a well-beaten egg white before filling. This keeps the berries and other fruits from making the pie bottoms mushy.
   - Baking a frozen pie is also a help, as the crust begins to bake before the heat thaws the filling, and the entire pie bakes for longer than it would normally.

1. **Blind Bake the Pie Crust:**
   To prevent sliding by blind baking, first line the pie plate with aluminum foil. Take a piece of aluminum foil long enough so that when folded in half, it covers the pie plate. Fold it in half, then shape it on the counter by pressing your hand down in the middle and pulling up on the sides (making sort of a bowl shape.) Now put the foil in your pie shell and gently press it so that it evenly covers the bottom and sides of the pie dough. Now put your pie weights in (you can use beans, rice, rock salt - virtually any small, heat-proof items to weigh the crust down so that it neither puffs up nor slides down). Bake in the preheated oven for about 10 minutes. Take out the aluminum foil and pie weights, and continue baking until lightly browned.
   - Another trick to weigh down the dough is to place empty pie pans on top of the dough in the pie plate. This is called double panning.

**Two-Crust Pie:** Brush a little water around the edge of the bottom crust before placing the top crust. This helps create a good seal once the two are crimped together.

Tip from Sarah Macsek of Bethlehem, PA: Before placing double-crusted pies in the oven, loosely wrap aluminum foil around the pie crust edges. This will help the edges from browning too quickly. Remove the aluminum about 10 minutes before pies are ready to come out of the oven so the crust is properly browned.

**Fruit Pies:** Always make deep slits in the top crust of fruit pie. If you do not do this, the filling will be soft and soggy. To prevent the crust from getting too dark, you can cover it with a strip of aluminum foil or a pie shield. You also have the option of reducing the oven temperature if you notice things getting too dark.

**Egg Wash:** My mother, Dorothy Hagerman, taught me these tricks for achieving a nice golden brown top crust.

   - 1 tablespoon heavy cream, half & half, or milk
   - 1 large egg yolk
   In a small bowl, beat cream and egg yolk together. Using a pastry brush, brush the surface of the top pie crust. Bake according to your recipe.

   **NOTE:** My mother also uses just cream or milk on the top crust.

**Cooling Baked Pies:** Cool baked pies on a wire rack set on the counter. The rack allows air to circulate under the pie, preventing it from becoming soggy from the steam remaining in it.

**Storing Prepared Pie Dough:** Pie dough may be refrigerated for up to 2 days. Frozen, up to 3 months.

**High-Altitude Baking:** When making pies at high altitudes, pie crusts are not greatly affected. A slight increase in liquid may help keep them from becoming dry. Use as little flour as possible when rolling out the dough.
There are three (3) basic ingredients in a pie crust - fat, flour, and liquid. You can come up with numerous variations just by changing your basic ingredients and their ratios.

**All Vegetable Shortening Pastry Recipe**

Vegetable shortening produces a flaky pie crust that is slightly easier to work with than one made with butter, but the flavor won't be as rich.

### 8- or 9-inch one-crust pie
- 1/3 cups plus 1 TBS chilled shortening
- 1 cup all-purpose flour plus extra for rolling
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 to 3 TBS ice water

### 8- or 9-inch two-crust pie
- 2/3 cup plus 2 TBS chilled shortening, cut into pieces
- 2 cups all-purpose flour plus extra for rolling
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 to 6 TBS ice water

In a large bowl with a pastry blender or two knives, cut vegetable shortening into flour and salt until particles are the size of small peas. Sprinkle in water, 1 tablespoon at a time, tossing with fork until all flour is moistened and pastry dough almost cleans side of bowl (1 to 2 teaspoons additional water can be added if necessary). You want the ingredients to barely bind together.

Flour your hands generously. Tilt the rolling pin and sprinkle it with flour as you rotate the rolling pin. On a lightly floured surface, form pastry into a ball; shape into a flattened round. (For two-crust pie, divide pastry into halves and shape into two rounds.) Roll pastry 2 inches larger than an inverted pie plate with a floured rolling pin. Try to control the rolling pin and move from the center out. Don't use the rolling pin to go back and forth. Use your rolling pin something like this: Roll North, pick up the pin, roll Northeast, pick up dough and move counter-clockwise, repeat. You want the crust as evenly rolled as you can.

Fold pastry into quarter folds and ease into pie plate, pressing firmly against bottom and sides of pie plate.

**All Butter Pastry Recipe**

Crusts made with all butter are very flavorful, though they are generally not quite as flaky as crusts made with shortening or lard.

### 8- or 9-inch one-crust pie
- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, plus extra for rolling
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon granulated sugar
- 1 cup cold unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 3 to 6 tablespoons ice water

### 8- or 9-inch two-crust pie
- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, plus extra for rolling
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon granulated sugar
- 1 cup cold unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 3 to 6 tablespoons ice water

In a food processor, process the flour, salt, and sugar until combined. Scatter the butter pieces over the flour mixture and process with 1-second pulses until butter bits are no larger than small peas, about 10 pulses. Turn the mixture into a medium bowl.

Sprinkle 6 tablespoons of ice water over the mixture. Using a rubber spatula, fold to mix. Press down on the dough with the broad side of the spatula until the dough sticks together, adding up to 2 tablespoons more water if the dough does not come together.

Flour your hands generously. Tilt the rolling pin and sprinkle it with flour as you rotate the rolling pin. Divide the dough into two balls and flatten each into a 4-inch dish. Wrap both separately in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 1 hour before rolling.

On a lightly floured surface, form pastry into a ball; shape into a flattened round. (For two-crust pie, divide pastry into halves and shape into two rounds.) Roll pastry 2 inches larger than an inverted pie plate with a floured rolling pin. Fold pastry into quarter folds and ease into plate, pressing firmly against bottom and side.

**Combination Vegetable Shortening & Butter Pastry Recipe**

Some of the best pie crusts are made with a combination of fats: half butter, for flavor, and half shortening, for flakiness.

### 8- or 9-inch one-crust pie
- 2 1/2 cup all-purpose flour, plus extra for rolling
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup chilled shortening
- 1/2 cup cold unsalted butter, cut into 1/4-inch cubes

### 8- or 9-inch two-crust pie
- 3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup chilled shortening
- 1/2 cup cold unsalted butter, cut into 1/4-inch cubes

In a food processor, process the flour, salt, and sugar until combined. Scatter the butter pieces over the flour mixture and process with 1-second pulses until butter bits are no larger than small peas, about 10 pulses. Turn the mixture into a medium bowl.

Sprinkle 6 tablespoons of ice water over the mixture. Using a rubber spatula, fold to mix. Press down on the dough with the broad side of the spatula until the dough sticks together, adding up to 2 tablespoons more water if the dough does not come together.

Flour your hands generously. Tilt the rolling pin and sprinkle it with flour as you rotate the rolling pin. Divide the dough into two balls and flatten each into a 4-inch dish. Wrap both separately in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 1 hour before rolling.

On a lightly floured surface, form pastry into a ball; shape into a flattened round. (For two-crust pie, divide pastry into halves and shape into two rounds.) Roll pastry 2 inches larger than an inverted pie plate with a floured rolling pin. Fold pastry into quarter folds and ease into plate, pressing firmly against bottom and side.
In a food processor, process the flour, salt, and sugar until combined. Add the vegetable shortening and process until the mixture has the texture of coarse meal, about 10 seconds. Scatter the butter pieces over the flour mixture and process with 1-second pulses until butter bits are no larger than small peas, about 10 pulses. Turn the mixture into a medium bowl.

Sprinkle 6 tablespoons of ice water over the mixture. Using a rubber spatula, fold to mix. Press down on the dough with the broad side of the spatula until the dough sticks together, adding up to 2 tablespoons more water if the dough does not come together.

Flour your hands generously. Tilt the rolling pin and sprinkle it with flour as you rotate the rolling pin. Divide the dough into two balls and flatten each into a 4-inch dish. Wrap both separately in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 1 hour before rolling. On a lightly floured surface, form pastry into a ball; shape into a flattened round. (For two-crust pie, divide pastry into halves and shape into two rounds.) Roll pastry 2 inches larger than an inverted pie plate with a floured rolling pin. Fold pastry into quarter folds and ease into plate, pressing firmly against bottom and side.

**Lard Pastry Recipe**

Lard produces the flakiest crust, but processed lard can have a chemical aftertaste. Our grandmothers swore by their lard pie pastry.

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour, chilled (divided) 3/4 cup chilled natural lard* 1 teaspoon salt 1/3 cup ice water

* Find natural lard (unhydrogenated or leaf lard) at your local meat market or Mexican market.

In a large bowl with a pastry blender or two knives, cut lard into flour and salt until particles are the size of small peas.

In a small bowl, combine remaining 1/4 cup flour and the water; whisk until smooth. Pour into lard/flour mixture; stir with a fork just until the ingredients are combined.

Divide dough in half and shape both halves into thick disk. Wrap in wax paper or plastic wrap, and chill for at least 1 hour or overnight before using rolling out.

Flour your hands generously. Tilt the rolling pin and sprinkle it with flour as you rotate the rolling pin. On a lightly floured surface, roll one of the pastry disks 2 inches larger than an inverted pie plate with a floured rolling pin. Try to control the rolling pin and move from the center out. Don't use the rolling pin to go back and forth. Use your rolling pin something like this: Roll North, pick up the pin, roll Northeast, pick up dough and move counter-clockwise, repeat. You want the crust as evenly rolled as you can.

Fold pastry into quarter folds and ease into pie plate, pressing firmly against bottom and sides of pie plate.

**Oil Pastry Recipe**

Probably the easiest pie pastry to make. As you are using a liquid fat, you don't need as much fat in this recipe. You can roll and re-roll oil crusts with no ill effects.

2 cups all-purpose flour 1/2 cup vegetable oil* 1 teaspoon salt 1/4 cup cold milk

* Extra-virgin olive oil may be substituted

In a large bowl, combine the flour and salt. Measure the vegetable oil and the milk into the same liquid measuring cup but do not stir. Add to the flour/salt mixture; mix briskly to combine until the dough comes together into a ball.

Divide the dough in half. Roll out each half to 1/8 inch thick between 2 sheets of wax paper.

NOTE: Because this pastry dough is made with oil, it must be used right away. After a day in the refrigerator, the oil will start to separate and seep out.
One-Crust Pie:
Trim overhanging edge of pastry one (1) inch from rim of pie plate. Fold and roll pastry under, even with pie plate; flute. Fill and bake as directed in recipe.

Two-Crust Pie:
Turn desired filling into pastry-lined pie plate. Trim overhanging edge of pastry 1/2 inch from rim of plate. Roll other round of pastry. Fold into quarters. Place over filling and unfold. Trim overhanging edge of pastry 1 inch from rim of plate. Fold and roll top edge under lower edge, pressing on rim to seal; flute. Cut slits so steam can escape. Cover edge with strip of aluminum foil to prevent excessive browning; remove foil during last 15 minutes of baking. Bake as directed in recipe.

Baked Pie Shell:
Also known as blind baking. Prick bottom and sides thoroughly with a fork. Bake in oven at 475 degrees F. approximately 8 to 10 minutes or until light brown; cool.

Lattice Top Crust:
See the double pie crust recipe for instructions on preparing the pie crust. Follow the double pie crust recipe through placing the bottom crust in the pie plate. Trim so there is approximately 1/2 inch overhang around the edge of the pie plate. Refrigerate the pie crust for the top until ready to use.

Roll out the top crust and cut into 1/2-inch strips. You can use a sharp knife, pizza cutter, or scallop-edged pastry wheel. If you're worried about cutting straight, use a ruler as a guide. Cover the pastry strips with plastic wrap and place the pan of dough in the refrigerator while you prepare the pie filling and transfer it to the pastry-lined pie plate.

When you're ready to weave, moisten the rim of the pie with a small amount of water. Place approximately 6 strips across the top of the filling. To weave the cross strips into the first 6 strips, fold every other one about half ways back on the pie. Place a strip across the pieces that are not folded back and then unfold the folded strips.

Fold back the strips that were left unfolded before and place another strip across the strips that are not folded back. Unfold the strips and continue on in this manner, alternating the folded strips. Repeat the same procedure on the other half of the pie.

Lift each strip and moisten the edge of the crust in that area with water and then press the strip back down to seal it at the edge. When the strips are all placed across the filling, trim the ends 1/8 inch shorter than the overhang of the bottom crust.

Moisten the entire edge of the crust and then turn the overhang from the bottom crust up over the ends of the strips so the edge of the crust is flush with the edge of the pie plate. Seal the bottom crust and strips by fluting the edges in a desired manner.

Place the pie in an oven preheated to 375°F and bake for approximately 45 minutes or until the crust is golden brown.

http://whatscookingamerica.net/piecrsthint.htm