

Coconut Cream Pie

For the Crust:

1½ cups flour
½ teaspoon salt
5 tablespoons cold butter
5 tablespoons cold lard
2-4 tablespoons ice water

For the Italian Meringue:

1 cup sugar
5 large egg whites
¼ cup water
⅛ teaspoon cream of tartar
1 teaspoon vanilla
½ cup shredded coconut

For the Filling:

¾ cup sugar
4 tablespoons cornstarch
2 tablespoons flour
3 cups cold milk
¾ teaspoon salt
5 large egg yolks
2 tablespoons butter
2 teaspoons vanilla
1 cup shredded coconut

To Make the Crust:

Place the flour and salt in the bowl of a food processor. Process for a minute to combine. Add the butter and the lard, cut into pieces, to the flour mixture. Pulse several times until you achieve a coarse-crumb consistency. With the processor running, add the ice water a tablespoon at a time. Use just enough water to bring the mixture into a ball in the processor bowl. Remove from the bowl, and knead quickly into a circular disk. Wrap in plastic and refrigerate for several hours or overnight.

Preheat the oven to 450°. Place the dough on a lightly floured board and roll out from the center to the edge with a floured rolling pin. Rotate the dough as you roll to achieve an even circle large enough to cover the bottom and sides of your pie plate. Roll the dough around your rolling pin, then unroll into the pie plate. Trim the edges and prick all over with a fork. Bake for 12-15 minutes until the crust is golden. Cool on a rack.

To Make the Filling:

In the top of a double boiler, whisk together the sugar, cornstarch, flour, and salt. Gradually whisk in the cold milk. Place the mixture over boiling water, whisking constantly for 8-12 minutes, until it thickens. Cover and continue to cook undisturbed for about 10 minutes.

In the meantime, beat the egg yolks well in a separate bowl. Gradually stir one cup of the hot cornstarch mixture into the egg yolks. Return it to the pan, and cook for about 2 minutes, gently whisking constantly. Do not overcook. Remove from the heat and gently stir in the butter, the vanilla, and the coconut. Gently stir from time to time to prevent a skin from forming. When nearly cool, turn into the baked pie shell. Chill the pie.

To Make the Italian Meringue:

Combine the sugar and the water in a small saucepan, stirring to thoroughly moisten the sugar. Begin beating the egg whites in a mixer. When the whites begin to foam, sprinkle on the cream of tartar and continue to beat.

At the same time bring the sugar mixture to a boil over medium heat. Continue boiling washing down the sugar crystals that form on the wall of the pan with a moistened pastry brush. Continue to cook until the sugar reaches the high end of the firm ball stage, about 248°.

By the time the sugar mixture is ready, the egg whites should have formed stiff peaks. Gradually pour the hot syrup into the egg whites in a steady stream while continuing to beat at high speed. Once all the syrup has been added, continue whipping until the meringue is smooth and shiny. Beat in the vanilla.

Spread the meringue over the pie filling, making certain that it touches the crust on all sides. Sprinkle with the remaining coconut.

Place in the middle of a 325° oven just until the the top is lightly browned. Cool before serving.