

Frozen Lime Pie

1 ¼ cups graham cracker crumbs
1 cup superfine sugar
¼ cup butter
5 large eggs
½ teaspoon cornstarch
5-6 ounces fresh lime juice

Zest of 1 lime
⅛ teaspoon salt
⅛ teaspoon cream of tartar
1 ½ cups heavy cream
1 teaspoon vanilla
1-2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar

For the Crust

Preheat the oven to 350°.

Place the graham crackers (about 8) in a food processor and run until fine crumbs are produced. Add ¼ cup of the superfine sugar. (If you can't find superfine sugar, you can create it by running granulated sugar in the processor for about 3 minutes.) Add the ¼ cup of room-temperature butter. Pulse the mixture until it is well combined.

Press the crumb mixture into a 9-inch pie plate. Do not press down too firmly, which makes the baked crust stick to the pan.

Bake the crust for about 6-8 minutes. I find that the generally recommended longer baking time makes the crust too hard. Remove the crust to a rack and let it cool completely.

For the Filling

Choose a pot that will hold a large bowl in the top. Fill the pot about halfway full with water, and bring that to a simmer.

Separate the eggs, placing the yolks in the bowl and the whites in the bowl of a stand mixer. Beat the yolks until they are lemon colored. Then beat in the cornstarch, which is not for thickening, but helps prevent the eggs from scrambling when cooked. Very gradually beat in ½ cup of the remaining superfine sugar. Continue beating until the yolks are very thick and form a slowly dissolving ribbon when you raise the beater.

Beat in 5 or 6 ounces of lime juice, depending on how tart you like your pie. Then beat in the lime zest.

Place the pot over, not in, the simmering pot of water, beating with a whisk until the mixture nicely coats a wooden spoon. Do not allow it to come near the boil, or you will have scrambled eggs. Place the bowl in some cold water until it is cooled.

In the meantime, add the salt to the egg whites and begin beating on medium-low speed until they become foamy. Gradually add the cream of tartar. Raise the mixer speed and continue beating until it just begins to form soft peaks. Very slowly add the remaining ¼ cup of superfine sugar, beating until the whites are shiny and form stiff peaks.

Remove the yolk mixture from the cold water. Stir in $\frac{1}{3}$ of the beaten egg whites until well incorporated. Gently fold in the remaining egg whites with a rubber spatula, using a J-motion, until no white is visible.

Turn the custard into the cooled graham-cracker shell, and smooth out the top. Bake in the lower level of the 350° oven for 15-18 minutes, when you should see some light brown spots on the custard. Remove the pie to a rack, and allow it to cool. Once cool, freeze the pie, where it will keep for 2-3 weeks. Once frozen, cover it with plastic wrap.

For the Cream

Chill a bowl and beater. Place the heavy cream in the cold bowl with the vanilla extract. Beat the cream until soft peaks are formed. Sift on the 1-2 tablespoons of confectioners' sugar, depending on how sweet you want the topping. Continue beating until firm peaks are formed.

To Serve

Remove the pie from the freezer at least 20 minutes before serving. Spread the whipped cream over the top, and decorate the pie with slices of lime dipped in sugar.

The pie will be about the texture of well-frozen ice cream. If you prefer a softer pie, you can skip the freezing and simply refrigerate it.

Placing the pie plate over a wet hot towel before slicing may help prevent the crust from sticking to the pie plate.