

Pie



for Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner

• SLICE, SERVE, & SMILE •

By Henry Verden



Few foods are more universal than pie. Any culture you look at has some variation. They come sweet or savory and are filled with just about any animal, vegetable, and combination of the two a person can think of. We eat them for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. We eat them as appetizers, main courses, and desserts; especially desserts.

Hands down, nobody eats more pie than Americans. We eat so much we have our own organization, The American Pie Council, and a National Pie Day on January 23. Why do we like it so much? Because it's so good. It affects all our senses. Nothing beats the sight of a fork pushing through a light, flakey crust, the smell of the fillings building anticipation, the taste bursting across your palette, feeling textures that change delightfully from pie to pie, and the sound of a satisfied sigh with each delicious mouthful.

Summer is the perfect time to celebrate the pie in its many forms. Think Fourth of July and apple pie—it's a perfect fit. Picnics and pie go together with as much old-fashioned charm as a horse and buggy. There's a whole wide world out there full of pies you haven't tried yet, and in the Upper Midwest, you will find a lot of delicious pies to try, even if you are not a baker.

Fruit Pies

The logical place to start is with fruit pie. Any fruit is a potential pie and most have been used. Fruit pies come in two types, baked and fresh. Fruit pies are the most universal variety out there. Every culture has one sort or another. In our neck of the woods, apple is the most popular with cherry close behind. You'll also find peach, raspberry, blackberry, cranberry, huckleberry, blueberry, and rhubarb to name a very few.

While single fruit pies predominate, the beauty of baked fruit pies is in the endless combinations that present themselves. Two or more fruits can be combined to create a fabulous whole that is much tastier than the sum of its parts. Flavors play off of each other in wondrous and surprising ways and the only limit is your imagination.

There are just too many good fruit pies to mention them all so I'll just talk about a few personal favorites. The Elegant Farmer hales from Mukwonago. Their signature pie is Apple Pie Baked in a Brown Paper Bag. They offer four varieties year-round and five more seasonal apple pies, both pure apple and apple mixed with other fruits. *Gourmet Magazine* and *The Wall Street Journal* named Elegant Farmer's pie



Elegant Farmer



LMNO' Pies



Hubbard Street Diner

the best in America. Elegant Farmer pies are available at Jacobson Brothers Meat and Deli stores, Sentry and Sendick grocery stores, dozens of other retail locations (call to find out where in your area), and soon via their website. Best yet, stop by their retail store in Mukwonago where they offer much more than just pie.

Empanadas

Empanadas are small, handheld pies with a variety of fillings. Cake Pastel in Janesville and Delavan makes great fruit empanadas. A visit to their stores will overwhelm you with a range of wonderful Hispanic pastries from sweet breads to impressive special occasion cakes, but the empanadas are a standout item. They offer both fruit and cream-filled and you will not go wrong with either one. Stop into one of their stores, pick up some baked goods and a perfectly browned rotisserie chicken, and you're well on the way to a feast fit for a king.

For those of us with no time or talent for baking, there is the U-Bake store in Madison. Their take and bake frozen pies are as good as homemade and will fool almost everyone. They feature Marie Callender's pies along with others that are equally tasty. We liked their Peach Raspberry Pie with Sour Cream Sauce. While you're there, check out a truly impressive assortment of other ready to bake goodies.

Fresh fruit

Fresh fruit pies are a whole different animal. A pie crust is baked off and then filled with fruit with just enough glaze to hold it all together. Succulent strawberries or juicy slices of peach piled high in a delicately baked crust are the very essence of summer. Perkins' delicious fresh fruit pies are made on location at each restaurant to ensure that they don't wait too long to be served. Perkins has 42 locations in Wisconsin and a quick trip to their website will tell you where they all are. The Hubbard Street Diner in Middleton is a great place to buy pie, any kind of pie. In season, their fresh fruit pies are piled high and waiting to make your day.

Hubbard Street Diner has its own bakery and all their pies are baked on the premises. Both Hubbard Street Diner and Perkins sell pies to take home by the pie or by the slice.

Cream pies

Cream pies have a loyal following of their own. Most cream pie fillings rely on whipping cream, condensed milk, cream cheese, or sour cream to create a lush, rich flavor. One of my personal favorites comes from Lane's Bakery, a Madison institution since 1954. Their Banana Cream Pie is everything a cream pie should be: rich, smooth, flavorful, and filled with big chunks of fruit. The only caveat is that banana cream pie doesn't hold well so pick it up the same day you plan to eat it.

Those of you who live near Milwaukee, Eau Claire, Onalaska, or Appleton are truly blessed because you live near a Bakers Square. They serve many wonderful pies but their cream pies are worth a side trip or a long drive. Whether you lean in the direction of a fruit-topped cream cheese pie, a Banana or Coconut Cream, chocolaty French Silk, or a tangy Lemon Meringue you owe it to yourself to stop in. Speaking of Lemon Meringue, Bakers Square has one of the best around, hands down. As with the other restaurants I've mentioned, Bakers Square pies are available whole or by the slice. A visit to their website will help you locate the one closest to you.

Savory Pie

At the other end of the pie spectrum are savory pies. Quiche is the best known of this variety but by no means the only kind. LMNO' Pies on Madison's westside has savory pies that are a meal by themselves. They have pre-made quiches or you can custom order, and with over 25 ingredients to choose from, you're not likely to run out of combinations.

Where LMNO' Pies stands alone is with their meat pies. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are all covered. The tastiest I've tried so far is the Cider Braised Pork Loin & Sweet Potato Top. A close second is their Bacon, Egg, and Cheese. Want



Cake Pastel



something special? All they need is 24 hours' notice and they will bake any of their pies you want.

Let's say it's 6:30p.m. on a Friday night. You've spent an intense day making sure a shipment of left-handed widgets gets shipped out to Borneo. Your sister calls to remind you that dinner is at her house at 8:00p.m. and you're supposed to bring dessert. What do you do? Easy, run to the grocery store and pick up a Marie Callender® frozen Lemon Meringue or French Silk Pie. Thaw it out and you have a delicious pie.

Of course, the best pie is the one you make at home. If you love pie and have never made one, or love making pie and want to get better, you need *The Pie and Pastry Bible* by Rose Levy Beranbaum. Beranbaum took more than ten

years to develop the recipes in this book and has compiled everything you will ever need to know about pie and pastry. For example, she offers 69 pages of pie crust recipes with comprehensive directions and explanations. This is a book by a true believer. Beranbaum really thinks that baking is life and her passion shows in her books. In the introduction to *The Pie and Pastry Bible* she says "there's nothing more empowering than the thrill of achieving good pastry."

Our love of pie has continued unabated since the time of the early Egyptians. I think that's because eating pie tends to be a social event; a chance to sit down with family and friends, enjoy good company, and something good to eat. Whether for breakfast, lunch, or dinner, life doesn't get more sweet or savory than that.

• IF YOU GO •

WHERE TO BUY THE PIES

Bakers Square

8 Wisconsin locations

Location finder at:

www.bakerssquareresaurants.com

Cake Pastel, LLC

227 E. Walworth Ave.

Delavan, WI 53115

(262) 728-6632

-or-

1314B Creston Park Dr.

Janesville, WI 53545

(608) 314-8666

The Elegant Farmer

1545 Main Street

Mukwonago, WI 53149

(262) 363-6770

www.elegantfarmer.com

Hubbard Avenue Diner

7445 Hubbard Avenue

Middleton, WI 53562

(608) 831-6800

www.foodfightinc.com/hubbard.htm

Lane's Bakery and Gift Shop

448 South Park Street

Madison, WI 53715

(608) 256-6645

www.lanesbakeryandgifts.com

LMNO' Pies

5957 McKee Road

Madison, WI 53711

(608) 235-5656

www.lmnopies.com

Perkins Restaurant and Deli

42 Wisconsin locations

Location finder at:

www.perkinsrestaurants.com

U-Bake

6632 Odana Road

Madison, WI 53719

(608) 833-3680

www.homebake.net