



Traditional southern chess pie features a simple egg-and-sugar custard; this version adds tart lemon and sweet Cara Cara orange juices for a vibrant tang. It's topped with a "plate" of crust—the fluted rounds punched out from the center dot the pie's rim—and finished with confectioners' sugar.

A ROUND OF APPLAUSE

citrus chess pie ×

Creating a crowd-pleasing showstopper of a pie is easier than it seems. We've updated classic fillings and decorated them with eye-catching crusts that almost any baker can master. Here, we reveal our clever tricks, walking you through them step by step. The only hard part is picking which to try first.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILL ANDERSON • RECIPES BY SHIRA BOCAR AND LAURYN TYRELL • TEXT BY SARAH DIGREGORIO

brown-sugar
butternut-squash pie ×



For recipes,
see page 136;
for decorating
techniques,
see page 96.

A PIE FULL OF STARS

Butternut squash is sweeter and smoother than more-fibrous pumpkin—it's a wonder it's not used in desserts more often. Roasting the flesh supplies a caramel note, while puréeing and straining it afterward is key for a silky texture. Upgrade a crimped crust with a fishtail-braided rim and a scattering of cutouts. You can arrange the pieces however you like; this crescent-shaped tumble was inspired by a vintage brooch.



chocolate-sesame
tarte soleil ×

THE SUN ALSO RISES

With semisweet chocolate and tahini frangipane layered inside, this radiant tart takes its cue from the candied, nutty flavors of chocolate-covered halvah. The sesame lends a complex, almost bitter edge that keeps the filling from being too sweet. For the top, the dramatic design demonstrates the power of a repeated pattern—in this case, created by dividing the dough into sections and just twisting each piece three times.



× red-currant poppy-seed linzer torte

POPPY ART

A one-ingredient pie filling? It's a Thanksgiving miracle. In this modernized linzer torte, ruby-red currant jam goes on the inside, poppy seeds provide crunch, and ground pecans give the crust a buttery, cookie-like delicacy. The top appears to be elaborately latticed, but looks are deceiving: You merely snip the ropes of dough to expose the uncoated interior before baking.



× cinnamon-swirl
apple slab pie

PUT A SPIN ON IT

A cross between an apple pie and a cinnamon roll, this recipe calls for a top crust made from sliced pinwheels of dough slathered with cinnamon-brown sugar butter. Thanks to the layers of spiced butter, the swirls get caramelized and super-crisp, almost like puff pastry, and are delicious combined with the sweet-tart apples in the filling. Slab pies are great for serving a crowd—or if guests want a sliver of each dessert.



× **puff-pastry
poached-pear pie**

A WINNING SCORE

Pears are often overlooked on the Thanksgiving dessert table. Here they're the star, with the wine-poached fruit enclosed between rounds of store-bought puff pastry. To make the seemingly intricate pattern, simply score the dough with a paring knife; when it puffs in the oven, the design will stand out. Be sure to bake the crust until it's deep golden brown: It doesn't just look great—it tastes better, too.

EASY AS PIE

The crusts on these pages may look tricky, but they're not. Here are the simple nips, cuts, and twists that will help you go from "ooh" to "aah." (For the full recipes, see page 136.)



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CITRUS CHESS PIE

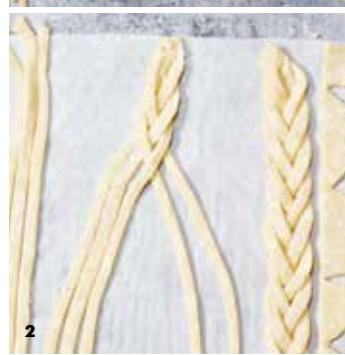
1. To make this design, you'll bake the top and bottom crusts separately, then combine them at the end. For the bottom, roll out a disk of dough; fit it into a pie dish, trimming off the excess. Roll out the second disk; cut it into an 8-inch round. (As a guide, trace around an upside-down cake pan.) Using a small, fluted round cutter, make evenly spaced holes in the dough. (You'll stick the cutouts on the rim of the bottom crust.) Crumple some parchment, then unfold it into the bottom crust; fill it with dried beans before baking both.

2. Wait for the filling to cool before dusting it with confectioners' sugar, or the sugar may dissolve into the pie.

3. Place the finished top crust in the center; don't worry, you can move it a bit to adjust.



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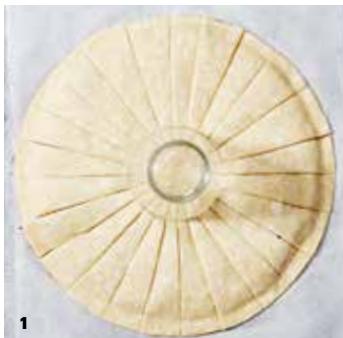
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BROWN-SUGAR BUTTERNUT-SQUASH PIE

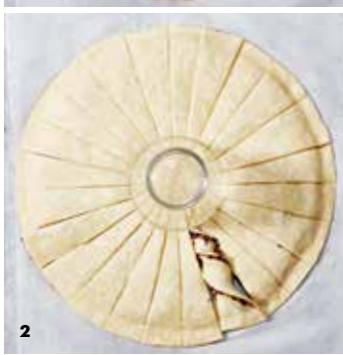
1. You'll use the same piece of dough for both the fishtail-braided rim and the crust stars scattered on top. After rolling out a disk of dough into an 11-by-14-inch rectangle, use a pastry wheel to cut fifteen $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-wide strips from one of the short sides.

2. To make the braids, take 5 strips and press the tops together. Place 3 strips to one side and 2 to the other. Pick up the outer strip on the side with 3 strips; cross it over, so it's now on the inside of the side that had 2. (It should now have 3.) Repeat to create a braid—the outer-third strip always crossing to the middle to join the side with 2 strips. Repeat with the remaining strips to make two more braids.

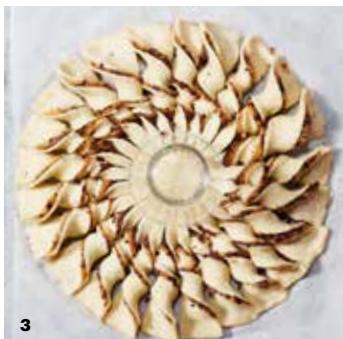
3. Using the remaining dough, cut out shapes such as stars, snowflakes, and crescents with cookie cutters.



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CHOCOLATE-SESAME TARTE SOLEIL

1. The key to this design is to divide the dough evenly into the rays. After filling and sealing the crusts together, put a glass upside-down in the center. (This is merely to make an impression; don't let it cut through the dough.) With the glass still in place, cut the tart into 4 equal sections. Then cut each in half to make 8. Finally, cut each eighth evenly into thirds to create 24 sections total.

2. Lift a section; twist it three times.

3. Repeat with the remaining sections, making sure you twist all of them in the same direction, with the same tightness of coil. Freezing the dough solid before baking will help it keep its shape in the oven.



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RED-CURRANT POPPY-SEED LINZER TORTE

1. After rolling out half the dough and fitting it into a tart pan, divide the rest of the dough into 8 equal pieces. Roll each into a rope, about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick and 10 inches long. This dough is very soft, so pop it back in the fridge to firm up if it gets too sticky to work with. Pour poppy seeds onto a rimmed baking sheet, then coat the ropes in seeds.

2. Fill the tart with jam, then lay the dough ropes over the top, trimming the ends to fit. Using scissors, make small diagonal snips in the ropes at $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch intervals, being careful not to cut all the way through.

3. Shift the snipped bits to the side to expose bare dough, alternating sides. A slight shift is fine, and there's no need to be exact: There's beauty in the imperfection.



CINNAMON-SWIRL APPLE SLAB PIE

1. We prefer to roll out dough on lightly floured parchment, especially for large pieces, as here: It reduces sticking and makes everything easier to move to the refrigerator. For the pinwheels, roll out a disk of dough into a 12-by-16-inch rectangle; spread it evenly with cinnamon–brown sugar butter. Starting at a long edge, tightly roll it into a log.

2. Slice the log into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-thick rounds. If the dough starts to flatten out on one side, reshape and return it to the fridge to firm up before finishing.

3. Spoon the apple filling into the piecrust. Arrange the cinnamon-swirl rounds over the apples, slightly overlapping them, until they're completely covered.



PUFF-PASTRY POACHED-PEAR PIE

1. For the top crust, roll puff pastry into a square about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick; cut it into a 10-inch round. (Use an upside-down cake pan as a guide.) With a pastry tip or small cookie cutter, cut out a 1-inch-diameter vent in the center. Gently press an upside-down 9-inch cake pan onto the dough to make a border. Freeze until firm but pliable. With a paring knife, score 8 petals around the vent, taking care not to cut all the way through. Score each petal with veins.

2. Roll out and cut the bottom crust into a 10-inch round; refrigerate. Arrange poached pears on top, leaving a 1-inch border. (This will leave room to pinch the crusts together.) Refrigerate.

3. After laying the top crust over the pears, adhere the edges with egg wash. Score the rim on a slight diagonal.

pick your finish

1

GIVE IT A WASH

A wash is essential to give pies a burnished crust. You can always use a whole beaten egg mixed with a little water for a medium-gold gloss. Or try one of these alternatives:

2

SPRINKLE WITH SUGAR

After applying a wash, scatter sugar over the top to add sweetness, texture, and shimmer. Different types provide different effects. Here are our favorites:



HEAVY CREAM

Heavy cream leaves a natural, light-golden color with a matte finish.



SANDING

Sanding is an all-purpose decorating sugar, used for a medium crunch and a sparkling finish.



EGG YOLK

Egg yolk contains more fat and less water than a whole beaten egg, resulting in a rich, dark color and a dramatic sheen.



TURBINADO

Turbinado (or raw) is quite coarse and jewel-like; it's for dramatic crunch and a deep, amber shine.



EGG WHITE

Egg white has more water than fat, which provides a pale-golden color and a lustrous glaze.



GRANULATED

Granulated is the finest, most subtle option and results in a delicate crunch and a clear, gentle gleam.