

Ask An Expert: Your Top Thanksgiving Pie Recipe

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By CBS Las Vegas

Have you ever wondered which dishes chefs enjoy preparing for the holiday season? [Chef Eric Jacques Crowley](#) is a seasoned, professional chef who brings his warmth and patience to his teaching classroom. Since 2003, his Culinary Classroom in West L.A. has helped students achieve their dreams of mastering the culinary arts. He is a teacher, mentor and expert in his field and has the experience to design and present some tasty treats that are well within most bakers' and cooks' capabilities. Chef Eric graciously consented to sharing two of his personal favorites. Be prepared to be dazzled as you have the opportunity to prepare these delectable dishes for your own family, fresh from the Chef's kitchen to yours.

Chef Eric Jacques Crowley
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Chocolate and Walnut Cookie Pie (Courtesy of Chef Eric Jacques Crowley)

Chocolate and Walnut Cookie Pie

Ingredients:

- 2 cups flour, all purpose
- 1 teaspoon salt
- pinch baking powder
- 6 T+1 t butter or Crisco, cold
- 6 T lard, cold
- 4-6 T ice water (as needed)
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 6 T flour
- 3 each eggs, beaten

- 6 ounces butter, room temperature or melted
- 1 1/2 T vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 cups chocolate chips
- 1 1/2 cups walnuts or pecans, chopped

Method:

1. In a medium bowl, combine the 2 cups of flour, salt and a pinch of baking powder. Add the butter and lard. Using a pastry cutter or your fingers, work the fat into the flour until the fat becomes pea-sized pieces.
2. Gradually add the ice water, 2 tablespoons at a time, until the dough comes together and can hold its shape. Do not knead the dough! This will cause the dough to become tough. Handle the dough as little as possible. Flatten the dough slightly, and let it rest, covered, in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.
3. Preheat an oven to 350 degrees F. Roll the dough out on a floured board and with a floured pin until it is about 1/8" thick. Line a pie pan with the dough, cutting off any excess that hangs over the edge.
4. In a medium-sized bowl, mix the 1 1/2 cups of sugar and 6 tablespoons of flour. Add the eggs, then the 6 ounces of butter.
5. Add the nuts, vanilla and chocolate chips.
6. Pour the mixture into an unbaked pie shell. Bake in the middle or lower rack of the oven for 30-45 minutes, or until the pie is done. The pie should be chewy, not runny.

Serve warm. This pie can be made in advance and reheated for service.



Mini Pumpkin Cheesecakes with Chocolate Ganache Sauce
(Courtesy of Chef Eric Jacques Crowley)

Mini Pumpkin Cheesecakes with Chocolate Ganache Sauce

Yield: four – 4 1/2-inch cakes

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups gingersnap cookie crumbs
- 5 T butter, unsalted and melted
- 1 T sugar

- 24 ounces cream cheese, room temp.
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup pumpkin puree
- 3 each eggs, large
- 1 t vanilla extract
- 1/2 t cinnamon, ground
- 1/8 t nutmeg, grated
- 1/8 t clove, ground

Method:

1. Preheat an oven to 350 degrees F. Wrap the outside of the cake pan(s) with aluminum foil. In a small bowl, mix the cookie crumbs, butter and 1 tablespoon of sugar. Press the mixture into the bottom and up the sides of the pan(s). Bake the crust for about 5 minutes, or until slightly darkened. Remove from oven.
2. In a processor, blend the cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Add the pumpkin, eggs, vanilla and spices. Process until smooth, making sure to scrape down the sides of the bowl, keeping all of the ingredients together. Pour the filling into the crust.
3. Bake the cakes until the center is set and the edges begin to crack, about 35-40 minutes. Remove from the oven and allow to cool inside the pans. For best results, allow to cool completely, then cover with a layer of chocolate ganache and refrigerate overnight.
4. When ready to serve, heat up additional chocolate ganache and drizzle over the cheesecakes.

Chocolate Ganache Sauce

Yield: 1 1/2 cups

Ingredients:

- 1/2 pound chocolate, finely chopped
- 3 T butter, diced and room temperature
- 1 cup cream
- 1 1/2 T light corn syrup
- 1/2 T vanilla

Method:

1. Place the chocolate and butter in a bowl and set aside.
2. Heat the cream and corn syrup in a medium pot over medium-high heat until it is scalded. Remove from the heat.
3. Pour the hot cream into the bowl with the chocolate. Stir with a spoon until the chocolate is melted. Add vanilla.
4. Cover the bowl and cool until the chocolate is set.
5. Use at room temperature. Thin with cream, if needed.