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DO YOU HAVE A SIGNATURE DISH?

Do you have a signature dish? Something you love to eat, love to bring, love to share when plans call for a delightful dish around the table.

Mine is PIE.....all kinds of pie. I never planned for this to be my signature dish but over the years, family food likes make this my dessert of choice. Pie, while sweet, is fruit, vegetable, or nut based, so it never really counts as dessert. At least that is how I see it and you are welcome to adopt my philosophy.

So have some pie using our yummy recipes. Invite a friend to share a slice and enjoy each other's company. Then consider sending me your signature dish recipe for publishing in upcoming articles. Mail to Debbie Rhoades, University of Maryland Extension, Frederick County Office, 330 Montevue Lane, Frederick, MD 21702. Please include your name and telephone number. To send by email drhoades@umd.edu and put SIGNATURE RECIPE in the subject line.

DEBBIE'S LEMON PIE

Lemon is my favorite flavor and one year my mother-in-law surprised me with a box of Myer lemons, freshly picked from her tree in California. Myer lemons are sweet, a cross between a lemon and an orange. You do not have to use Myer lemons but I do always use fresh lemons. Freeze the juice in ice cube trays so you will have it on hand. It is much better than bottled lemon juice.

1 graham cracker piecrust
1/2 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
1 can Eagle Brand condensed milk
8 ounce container frozen whipped topping

Take whipped topping out of the freezer to thaw for 45 minutes. Squeeze fresh lemons. Mix together lemon juice and condensed milk. Fold in whipped topping. Pour into graham cracker piecrust and freeze until ready to serve. Store uneaten pie in refrigerator.

DAVID'S APRICOT PIE

My husbands' brother is the creator of this fabulous pie, which is his signature dish. It is so wonderful that I begged him to bring one on a plane once. The secret is to use ripe apricots, just picked from the tree.

Crust

2 cups flour, all purpose or pastry
2 Tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup butter (not too soft)
3 Tablespoons shortening
5 Tablespoons cold water

Sift the dry ingredients and combine. Cut in half of the butter and shortening until the size of rice. Cut in the remaining butter and shortening until slightly larger. Add water a little at a time and mix gently (lift with fork). Set aside in a bowl and cover with a damp cloth until ready to roll out.

Sprinkle a little flour on the rolling surface. Press dough into a ball and sprinkle with a little flour. Flatten slightly in hands, place on rolling surface. Flatten with hand to a 4" disk, smooth perimeter, sprinkle a little more flour. Roll out from center in all directions. Do not over-roll. Sprinkle more flour on crust and wipe rolling pin as necessary. Place on pie and seal as described below.

Filling

4 cups washed and halved apricots
3/4 cup sugar
2 Tablespoons corn starch
1/8 teaspoon salt
1 Tablespoon lemon juice
1 to 2 Tablespoons butter
Pie crust

Mix together sugar, cornstarch, and salt. Roll out the pie bottom and coat with egg white to prevent soggy crust. Prepare the fruit. Do not mush it. Combine fruit and dry ingredients, and mix GENTLY. Add to pie shell and dot top with butter. Roll top crust. Moisten lip of bottom crust with water (wet finger), and add top crust. Pinch all around the edge to seal and make a few knife slits in the top. Place pie on baking pan to catch the drippings. Preheat oven to 400° F. Bake 15 minutes at 400° F, then reduce the heat to 300° F and bake about 50 minutes more.

GRANDMA MARY'S STRAWBERRY PIE

Linda Smith is the administrative assistant who makes our office run. When I mentioned the idea for this article she told me about this wonderful pie -- her mother-in-law's signature dish. My Mother-in-law, Mary, used to make these wonderful strawberry pies every year. They're cool, crisp and refreshing! Even though the recipe says you can use other fruit, we never have, as the strawberry is just too delicious. I also included her pie crust recipe, or you can cheat like I sometimes do and buy one.

3/4 cup sugar
2 tablespoons corn starch
1 cup water
2-3 tablespoons strawberry jello (I use half of a 3 oz pkg)
1 quart strawberries, washed, dried and capped
1 baked 9-inch pie shell

Mix sugar, corn starch and water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil and boil a few minutes until clear and thickened. Remove from heat and stir in undissolved jello. Let cool. Arrange whole berries, with capped ends placed down in pie shell to fit snugly and work smaller berries around outside edge; pour glaze over to cover. Refrigerate.

*Glazed Fresh Peach Pie: Follow above recipe increasing jello (using peach) to a whole 3 oz pkg. Works best if peach slices are halved to bite size and glaze is mixed with peaches before putting in shell. I also stir a spoonful of Fruit Fresh into peaches before mixing with glaze. *Also can use blueberries.

PIE CRUST (Makes 2 – 2 crust 9”)

Mix: 4 cups flour
1 3/4 cup shortening
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon vinegar

Beat: 1 egg
2 teaspoons salt
1/2 cup cold water

Combine above, mold into ball and refrigerate for 15 minutes. Use as pie recipe directs, either baked or unbaked. To bake: place in pie pan, prick the surface of the dough with a fork several times and bake in a preheated 400°F oven for 12-15 minutes, making sure it doesn't get too brown. Cool.

Deborah Rhoades, MA, RD, LDN, is a licensed Registered Dietitian and Extension Educator in Family and Consumer Sciences. For more information about the University of Maryland Extension Frederick County Office check out our website <http://Frederick.umd.edu>

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