

shoofly pie

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Shoofly Pie

Molasses and brown sugar under a crumb top, from the Pennsylvania Dutch. The name is usually explained by flies attracted to the open molasses, and the pie comes in two forms that are genuinely different desserts: **wet-bottom**, with a layer of gooey molasses custard under a cake layer, and **dry-bottom**, where the crumb is mixed all the way through and the result is closer to a coffee cake in a crust.

Wet-bottom is the one worth making.

What makes it work

- **The soda goes in the boiling water, not the dry mix.** Baking soda dissolved in boiling water and stirred into the molasses is what makes the wet layer foam up and then settle under the crumb.
- **Layer, do not mix.** Molasses liquid in the shell first, then two-thirds of the crumb scattered on, then the rest. The liquid rises through the lower crumb as it bakes and leaves a gooey stratum at the base.
- **Use a real baking molasses**, not blackstrap — blackstrap is bitter enough to ruin it. See [Molasses](#).
- **Do not blind bake.** This is one of the few custard-ish pies where the raw shell is correct; the filling is thick enough not to soak it.
- **Take it out slightly underdone in the middle.** The wet bottom is the point.

Ingredients

One 23 cm pie. Serves 8.

- 1 unbaked shell — [all-butter pie crust](#)

Crumb:

- 250 g all-purpose flour
- 150 g light brown sugar
- 115 g unsalted butter, cold and cubed
- 3 g fine salt
- 2 g ground [cinnamon](#)
- 2 g [nutmeg](#)

Molasses layer:

- 240 ml [molasses](#) or dark treacle
- 240 ml boiling water
- 8 g baking soda
- 1 [egg](#), beaten
- 50 g light brown sugar

Method

Heat the oven to **190 °C / 375 °F**. Line the tin with pastry and chill it.

Rub the crumb ingredients together to coarse crumbs and set aside.

Stir the soda into the boiling water — it will fizz — then whisk in the molasses, brown sugar and beaten egg.

Pour the liquid into the chilled shell. Scatter two-thirds of the crumb evenly over the surface; it will sink partly. Scatter the remaining third on top.

Bake **15 minutes** at 190 °C, then reduce to **175 °C / 350 °F for 30–35 minutes**, until the crumb is set and the centre still moves slightly.

Cool completely, at least three hours.

Notes

- **It is eaten at breakfast in Lancaster County**, with coffee, which tells you something about how sweet Pennsylvania Dutch breakfast is.
- Dry-bottom: mix all the crumb into the liquid and bake as one. Firmer, more cake-like, keeps longer.
- **Keeps four days** at room temperature.

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