

sugar cream pie

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Sugar Cream Pie

Cream, sugar, a starch and nutmeg, and nothing else — no eggs at all. Indiana adopted it as the unofficial state pie; the Shaker and Quaker communities of the Midwest are the usual source, and the other name for it, *desperation pie*, says exactly what it is for. Nothing in it is perishable or seasonal.

Without eggs there is no custard to curdle, which makes it one of the most forgiving pies here.

What makes it work

- **Starch sets it, not egg.** Cornstarch or flour cooked into hot cream. It has to actually boil for a minute or the starch will not reach full thickening power and the pie stays loose.
- **Two methods, both traditional.** Cook the filling on the stove and pour it into a baked shell, or mix it raw in an unbaked shell and bake the lot. The stovetop version is more reliable.
- **Brown the top under a hot grill** with butter and nutmeg. The blistered, freckled surface is what the pie is supposed to look like.
- **Nutmeg is the only flavouring** and it should be grated fresh and used liberally. See [Nutmeg](#).
- **It sets fully only when cold.** Four hours minimum.

Ingredients

One 23 cm pie. Serves 8.

- 1 blind-baked shell — [all-butter pie crust](#)
- 600 ml double cream
- 200 g granulated sugar
- 50 g [cornstarch](#)
- 4 g fine salt
- 60 g unsalted butter
- 2 tsp vanilla — see [Pure vanilla extract](#)
- [nutmeg](#), for the top
- 1 tbsp granulated sugar, for the top

Method

Blind bake and cool the shell.

Whisk the sugar, cornstarch and salt in a heavy saucepan. Whisk in the cream a little at a time so no lumps form.

Cook over medium heat, whisking constantly, until it thickens and comes to a boil. Boil, still whisking, for a full minute.

Off the heat, whisk in the butter and vanilla.

Pour into the shell and smooth the top. Scatter the tablespoon of sugar and grate nutmeg generously over.

Slide under a hot grill for 2–3 minutes, watching constantly, until browned and blistered in patches.

Cool, then refrigerate at least four hours.

Notes

- **Half milk and half cream** works and is lighter; all milk sets thinner and tastes noticeably plainer.
- The Amish version bakes it in a raw shell at 220 °C for 15 minutes and then 175 °C for 40, stirring once at the halfway mark with a knife.
- **Keeps three days refrigerated.**

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