

Taste

APPLE HAND PIES

Start to finish: 1 hour
 Makes 18 hand pies
 ¾ cup sugar
 2 teaspoons cinnamon
 ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
 1 tablespoon butter
 3 small baking apples, such as Granny Smith, peeled, cored and diced (about 2 cups)
 2 teaspoons cornstarch
 1 teaspoon lemon juice
 1 tablespoon water
 Two 14.1-ounce packages refrigerated pie dough (each package contains 2 rounds of dough)
 1 egg
 1 tablespoon milk

In a small bowl, combine the sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg. Set aside.

In a deep skillet over medium-high heat, melt the butter. Add the apples and 1/3 cup of the sugar mixture. Saute for 3 to 4 minutes, or until just tender.

In a small bowl, stir together the cornstarch, lemon juice and water, then add to the apples and stir. Cook until the juices thicken and bubble, about 1 minute. Set the filling aside to cool.

Heat the oven to 350 degrees. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.

One at a time, on a lightly floured surface unroll each of the 4 rounds of pie dough. Using a 3-inch circular cookie cutter, cut out 9 rounds from each piece of dough for a total of 36 rounds.

In a small bowl, beat together the egg and the milk.

To assemble the hand pies, place 1 dough round in front of you. Lightly brush around the edges of the round with the egg mixture. Place 2 teaspoons of apple filling in the center of the dough. Top with a second round of dough. Gently press down so that the filling is enclosed and the edges of the top round meet the edges of the bottom round. Use a fork to crimp and seal all around the edges. Brush the top with more of the egg mixture and sprinkle with the reserved cinnamon sugar. Use a paring knife to poke a hole in the top to vent steam. Repeat with the remaining dough rounds and filling.

Place the hand pies on the baking sheets, leaving 1 inch between them. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes, or until the crust is golden brown. Let cool for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to finish cooling.

Nutrition information per pie (values are rounded to the nearest whole number): 241 calories; 111 calories from fat (45 percent of total calories); 12 g fat (5 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 16 mg cholesterol; 32 g carbohydrate; 2 g protein; 1 g fiber; 167 mg sodium.

Make your own red, white and blue desserts

PATRIOTIC WATERMELON FRUIT BOWL

1 seedless watermelon
 Strawberries, blueberries, grapes and honeydew, or whatever fruit you like
 Standing the watermelon on one end, cut off the top (you can cut the bottom to be flat if it's not sturdy enough to stand on its own), and scoop out all the flesh, making the bowl thinner as you go to the top. Using the top of a small glass or jar and a black marker, draw the outline of a scalloped edge around the top of the watermelon and cut along it using a serrated knife, finished with a sharper knife. Fill bowl with mixture of watermelon and honeydew cut into bite-size pieces with a melon baller as well as strawberries and blueberries. Hang mint sprigs and/or strawberries or cherries on the stem from scalloped corners to decorate.

Courtesy of Wemrock Orchards, Freehold Township

BEST "EASY" STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE

Serves 12-16
 1 box yellow cake mix (enough for 2 thicker layers or 3-4 thinner ones)
 1-2 quarts strawberries as desired
 1 pint blueberries, if desired
 ¼ cup sugar, or to taste
 1 can good-quality real whipped cream

Bake the cake according to packaged directions, and slice it horizontally so that you have 3-4 thinner layers. Saving 4-5 whole strawberries to put on the top of the cake for decoration, mash strawberries with a bit with sugar so they're crushed and syrupy and so that their juice will soak into the cake. Put one piece of yellow cake on a plate and make an empty circle of whipped cream on top of the yellow cake, right around the edge but not past it. Spread strawberry mix in the "well" you have created with the whipped cream. Spread whipped cream on top of the strawberry mix. Add another layer of yellow cake and draw another whipped cream circle on it; fill the circle with more strawberry mix and again top this with whipped cream. If you have enough strawberry mix and whipped cream, you can do it again. The top-most layer will just be whipped cream on yellow cake, with whole strawberries placed in the whipped cream for decoration. This pretty cake should not have whipped cream on the sides, just in between layers and on top. Drizzle top with blueberries if desired and serve immediately or refrigerate.

Courtesy of The Macaroon Shop, Avon

GLAZED FRESH BERRY TARTS

Serves 6-8
Tart filling:
 1 cup sugar
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 3 tablespoons cornstarch
 ¾ cup orange juice
 1 tablespoon lemon juice
 1 quart fresh strawberries, hulled and sliced
 1 pint blueberries
 1 cup heavy cream
 ½ to 1 tablespoon confectioners sugar, to taste
Tart pastry dough: (or buy premade)
 1 cup flour
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 1 stick cold butter, cut into small pieces
 1 egg yolk
 2 tablespoons ice water

Dough: Mix flour and salt, and cut in butter, blending it with your hands until it resembles a coarse meal. In a separate bowl, whisk together egg and water and mix into dry ingredients, kneading into a dough. Roll out into a 9-inch circle for one large tart, or to make smaller tarts, place the rolled-out dough over an upside-down muffin pan and cut around each cup to create shells. Preheat oven to 425 degrees. To make a large tart, place the rolled-out dough in a tart pan. To make small tarts, place dough rounds in aluminum pastry shell cups. Prick dough all over with a fork, and bake for about 12 minutes or until lightly browned.

Filling: Combine the sugar, salt, cornstarch, orange juice and lemon juice in a saucepan and cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until thickened and keep cooking for 10 minutes. Transfer mixture to a bowl and cool completely. Fill the baked tart shells with berries and cover with the glaze mixture. Before serving, whip the heavy cream and sugar to form whipped cream. Spread over the berry filling in the shells, and garnish with a few strawberries and blueberries as desired.

Courtesy of Wemrock Orchards, Freehold Township

DESSERTS

Continued from Page D1

with ice cream, and ... it's as American as baseball and hot dogs."

Glazed fresh-berry tarts are another easy, pretty and personalized way to showcase the nation's colors at dessert time.

"Just bake individual tart shells out of tart-pastry dough or pie dough and fill them with glazed berries topped off with whipped cream. They look involved but are really easy to make and can be put together with help from friends, family or kids right as you're ready to serve them, which can be fun for everyone," she said.

For those who have less of a sweet tooth or a desire for a more refreshing, low-calorie approach, a fresh, color-coordinated fruit salad is a welcome addition to any dessert table.

Giunco-Meyer's version offers strawberries, blueberries, grapes and watermelon in a creatively carved watermelon bowl finished with delicate garnishes.

A strawberry-rhubarb compote made by heating and cooling a mixture of rhubarb, strawberries, sugar, lemon juice and vanilla makes yet another refreshing option and combines tart and sweet flavors that complement each other nicely.

Finished with a dollop of whipped cream or yogurt, this colorful creation represents the very best of summer.

At The Macaroon Shop



Glazed fresh berry tarts at Wemrock Orchards. TANYA BREEN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Blueberry crumb pie (left) and cherry pie with vanilla ice cream at Wemrock Orchards.

in Avon, owners Claire and Chris Morrison have a variety of red, white and blue decorations throughout their store in anticipation of the nation's upcoming birthday.

"It's fun to celebrate the holidays with desserts," Claire said, and noted that classic strawberry shortcake is the perfect dessert to serve at this time of year.

"I think it's the best summer dessert there is. It's simple and refreshing on a hot day and incorporates America's colors," she said. "Plus, it has a very nostalgic quality, and everybody loves it and looks forward to it at the end of a meal."

Takers can indulge in The Macaroon Shop's signature version of this old-fashioned American treat, or Morrison suggested an easy version that home bakers can make in a snap.

"Just use a yellow cake mix, fresh or high-quality canned whipped cream, and strawberries," she said. "You can even make this a fun family activity with the kids by picking your own strawberries at a local farm."

"What I love most about the Fourth of July is that everyone in America celebrates it and it's a nondenominational occasion, a holiday that's common to all of us," Giunco-Meyer said. "To commemorate it through dessert, people should take advantage of all of the fresh and beautifully colored red and blue fruits in New Jersey and then add in white with ice cream, whipped cream, yogurt, confectioner's sugar or cream cheese."

"Most of all," Claire Morrison said, "have fun with your dessert and enjoy your family and friends. That's the true American spirit."

Wemrock Orchards is at Route 33 W. and Wemrock Road in Freehold Township and can be reached at 732-431-2668 or www.wemrockorchard.com.

The Macaroon Shop is at 107 Main St. in Avon and can be reached at 732-776-6363 or www.themacaroonshop.com.

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