



I adore a classic "one bowl" Southern chess pie—and this one almost fits that bill (there is a saucepan involved).

This treasured recipe has been a favorite in our family for years. I hope you enjoy it!

~ Tamera

Ingredients:

- 3 eggs
- 1/4 cup whole milk (can use 2%)
- 1 tsp real vanilla (please, no artificial vanilla, I beg of you)
- 1 stick butter
- 3 tablespoons powdered cocoa
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 unbaked pie crust*

*Ingredients and directions for the pie crust are below—or you can use a store bought crust if you don't truly love your friends and family (LOL)

Directions:

In a large mixing bowl combine eggs, milk, and vanilla and stir well.
In a saucepan, melt butter over low heat, then stir in cocoa and sugar and mix well.
Gradually add the egg mixture (eggs, milk, and vanilla) a little at a time into the saucepan and stir until well combined.

Pour the mixture into an unbaked pie shell and bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes or until the center is set. Don't over bake. And not to worry if cracks form after you take the chess pie out of the oven. That's a Southern cook's sign of a fabulous bake!

Enjoy!

Old-Fashioned Pie Crusts

(makes two large crusts)

From the novel *To Wager Her Heart* (and *A Beauty So Rare*)

This is a wonderful crust that I've been using for years. A woman in the 19th century would likely have used lard in place of Crisco (since lard was cheaper than butter in her day), and you may too, if you prefer. Yes, lard is still available on most grocery shelves, although I'm pretty sure I just felt you shudder!

This pie crust "freezes beautifully " as they say in *Steel Magnolias* (instructions on freezing below), so even though I may need only one pie crust at the moment, I always use this recipe and make a second, and freeze it for later. Makes that next pie (or savory custard) go twice as fast!

Ingredients for pie crust:

1 ½ cups Crisco (or lard)
3 cups all-purpose flour
1 egg
5 tablespoons ice water
1 tablespoon white vinegar
1 teaspoon salt

In a large bowl, using a pastry cutter (or two knives will do the job), gradually work the Crisco into the flour for 3 to 4 minutes until it resembles coarse meal. In a smaller bowl, whip the egg and then pour it into the flour/shortening mixture. Add 5 tablespoons of ice-cold water, 1 tablespoon of white vinegar and 1 teaspoon of salt. Stir gently until all ingredients are blended well.

Halve the dough. Form the 2 evenly-sized balls of dough and place each into large sealable plastic bags. Using a rolling pin, slightly flatten each to about 1/2 inch thickness to make rolling easier later. Seal the bags and place them in the freezer until you need them. (If you're using the crusts immediately, it's still a good idea to let them chill in the freezer for about 15- 20 minutes. They'll be much easier to work with.)

When you're ready to roll the dough for your crust, remove from the freezer and allow to thaw for 15 minutes (if it's frozen). On a well-floured surface, roll the dough, starting at the center and working your way out. Sprinkle flour over the top of the dough if it's too moist. If the dough starts to stick to the countertop, use a metal spatula and gently scrape it up and flip it over and continue rolling until it's about ½ inch larger in diameter than your pie plate (or iron skillet).

Using a spatula, carefully lift the dough from the surface of the counter into the pie pan. (I sometimes fold my well-floured dough in half and then "unfold" it onto iron skillet. Or you can lop it over your rolling pin. That works well, too.) Gently press the dough against the

sides of the pan or skillet, getting it all tucked in. Then crimp the edges in whatever way you prefer. And now, you're ready for that yummy savory custard filling above, or maybe for a fruit pie.