



PIE TIME!

WRITTEN BY MARY ANN DESANTIS / PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN JERNIGAN

Cupcakes are so last year... 2013 will be the year of the pie, according to the folks who predict such trends. You don't have to wait for the new year to sample some of the delicious pies Ocala Style has found. You don't even need your own pie pan, because these creations come ready-made. Of course, if you prefer to bake your own, we have a few tips for those, too.



DERBY-PIE®

Some people are cake people; others are cookie people. I have always been a pie person myself. It began with my grandmother's lemon meringue pie, my earliest memory of pie nirvana. She would always make a lemon meringue pie when she knew I was coming to visit. Holidays at her house usually included several types of pies, and I quickly developed a taste for all the classics: apple, peach, cherry and pumpkin.

I wish I could say that I developed my grandmother's baking skills. The only time I attempted to make a lemon meringue pie, the cooked filling was so soupy we needed a spoon to dish it out of the pie plate. My first apple pie had a crust so tough we looked for a mini-hacksaw to cut it. I've had some success with a pear-crumble pie, but the kitchen was a sticky mess afterward.

So I've discovered the next best thing—and I don't mean

mass-produced grocery store pies. My secret is finding others with special pie-making talents. Along the way, I've found pies that have some rather unique stories.

"The secret recipe is for keeping; the pie is for sharing."
KERN'S KITCHEN
DERBYPIE.COM

When I visited Louisville, Kentucky, last spring, I experienced two memorable events: a reception at the beautiful Kentucky Derby Museum and my first bite of the legendary Derby-Pie®. At the time, I thought maybe the Derby-Pie® was so extraordinary because I tasted it fresh in the town where it was made. The pie I brought home, though, offered the same

delicious blend of sweet, crunchy goodness in a custard-like filling.

Many folks have imitated the chocolate-walnut pie, but the authentic Derby-Pie® is baked exclusively by Louisville's Kern's Kitchen, a family-owned operation that bakes more than 120,000 Derby-Pies® a year. The pie was developed by George Kern with the help of his parents, Walter and Leandra, in 1954, and it was the signature pastry for Melrose Inn, a Kentucky restaurant that George managed. When trying to come up with an appropriate name, family members tossed ideas into a hat and "derby pie" was the one pulled out. The pie became so popular that in 1968 the family registered the name with the U.S. Patent Office and it became trademarked.

A lot of bakers recognize the fresh chocolate chips and walnuts, but no one has been able to replicate the special filling and delicate crust. The recipe remains

a family secret, and one person bakes every single pie that comes from Kern's Kitchen.

The triple-wrapped and sealed pies can be stored safely for up to a month in a freezer. Kern's Kitchen partners with several online retailers to ship the pies nationwide with prices that begin around \$19 plus shipping. A single-serving Derby-Pie® Chocolate Nut Tart is also available for about \$4 and can be a mouthwatering stocking stuffer.

SERVING TIP: Derby-Pie® is best served by slicing frozen and serving warm. Kern's Kitchen recommends warming for 12 minutes in a 350-degree oven. Add a dollop of whipped cream and you have the perfect dessert for a holiday or a New Year's bowl game party.

“A wow factor for your dessert table.”

THE BLUE OWL RESTAURANT AND BAKERY
THEBLUEOWL.COM

Both Pillsbury.com and Boston-based events management firm Longwood Events and Lifestyle predict pies will be the trendiest holiday desserts this year and will remain popular into 2013. I think they could also reasonably forecast that pies will reach new heights. A good example is the Levee High Apple Pie™, which towers 9 inches above its pie plate.

Located in the historic town of Kimmswick, Missouri, The Blue Owl Restaurant and Bakery is home to several types of award-winning desserts, but it's the Levee High Pies™ that have brought national attention to owner Mary Hostetter's creations. The Levee High Apple Pie™ has been featured on the Food Network with Paula Deen, and the Caramel Pecan version was one of Oprah's favorite gift-giving ideas in *Oprah Magazine* last December. The *Today Show* recently described the 13-pound pie as “a wow factor for your dessert table.”

Mary and her staff created the dessert after the Great Flood of '93. Levees held back the Mississippi River flood waters and kept Kimmswick from being destroyed. Nevertheless, The Blue Owl was closed for nearly two months after the flood. When Mary and her staff returned, they wanted to do something to honor the levees that saved the town and came up with the Levee High Apple Pie™.

Since Oprah featured the story in 2011, the Blue Owl has been flooded with orders for the pies, which each have 18 hand-peeled and hand-placed Golden Delicious or Granny Smith apples. During last year's holiday season, The Blue Owl peeled more than 20,000 apples to meet the demand, and Mary had to hire 40 additional people to ship 2,000 pies the week before Christmas. She half-jokingly says that she needs to buy an apple orchard.

The pies are shipped frozen and must be baked before serving. The first slice can be a challenge to remove from the pie pan, but the rich, buttery juice and delicious apples make it easy to ignore any messy slices. By the way, each slice contains about two and a half apples. Prices for the Levee High pies begin at \$40.

SECRET TIP: Want to make your own?

Use an old-fashioned Tupperware® Lettuce Keeper bowl to build the mound of apples. Tightly stack thinly sliced apples into the bowl and then quickly flip the filled bowl onto a pie plate already containing a layer of apples inside the bottom crust. The Blue Owl scours flea markets for the old-fashioned plastic bowls because they work so well.

LEVEE HIGH APPLE PIE

Courtesy of The Blue Owl Restaurant and Bakery

- Pie crust for two pies
- 12 cups Golden Delicious or Granny Smith apples (14–16)
- 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon sugar, divided
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 dash salt
- 1 teaspoon butter, cut into small pieces
- ¼ cup milk

Peel apples and cut thinly. Preheat the oven to 450°F. Roll pastry into two rounds. Fit one round into a deep-dish pie plate. Place apples in a large bowl. Sprinkle with 1 cup sugar, flour, cinnamon and salt; toss to combine. Use a small, deep mixing bowl for a mold, and place apple slices, overlapping consecutive slices until bowl is filled. Invert filled bowl into crust. Dot apples with butter. Cover mounded apples with remaining pastry round. Moisten edges of crust with water, seal and flute edges tightly. Stir together milk and remaining 1 tablespoon sugar; brush lightly on top crust. Prick crust to allow steam to escape. Bake at 450°F for 15 minutes; then reduce heat to 350°F and bake for 1 hour or until crust is golden brown, shielding fluted edges with aluminum foil if they begin to brown too quickly.



COTILLION COCONUT MERINGUE PIE

“GLORY BE” SWEET POTATO PIE WITH MARSHMALLOW MERINGUE

HOOCHIE MAMA PIE

“Pies as Southern as possible.”

THE COTILLION SOUTHERN CAFÉ
CAFECOTILLION.COM

Just before Thanksgiving 2011, I had dinner at The Cotillion Southern Café and was planning to take home one of Kathi Vincent's pumpkin or sweet potato pies. However, things changed after my husband and I tried the “Hoochie Mama Pie.” We ordered it because we were curious about the name, but one bite was all it took to convince us this pie was coming home with us. And my guests are still asking a year later if we're going to serve that pie again.

Known for her authentic desserts, Kathi's pie repertoire includes all the ones you would expect from a Southern kitchen, such as coconut meringue, peanut butter and key lime pies. Her chess pie with coconut and pecans was not necessarily a best-seller, but that all changed when one of her customers inadvertently renamed it in a moment of pie ecstasy.

“I served it to one of my regular customers, and she took one bite and sat very still with eyes closed,” remembers Kathi. “I asked her if everything was OK, and she squealed very excitedly, ‘hoochie maaa-ma!’”

Now whenever Kathi writes “Hoochie Mama Pie” on her daily dessert board, customers—especially new ones—inevitably wonder what that could possibly be. And like my own guests last year, they always want to know when the custard-based pie will appear again.

“I have one customer who calls every few days to see if it's on the dessert menu for that day,” says Kathi with a laugh. “I never dreamed it would become so popular.”

This time of year, Kathi is pressed to keep up with orders for her classic Southern-style pies, especially her easy-to-make “Glory Be Sweet Potato Pie.” Surprisingly, the pie filling is made with a canned sweet potato casserole.

“I tried so many recipes, including ones where I had to steam and bake my own sweet potatoes, but this one is simply the best,” she says. “It's won all of my family's taste tests.”

Her own personal favorite, though, is the classic coconut custard pie with meringue.

“I just love pie, and especially the ones with meringue,” she says. “The coconut pie is special and a true Southern classic.”

The Cotillion's take-out pies range from \$30 to \$40 depending on the variety, and orders must be placed 48 hours in advance excluding Sundays when the restaurant is closed.

SECRET TIP: To make meringues on pies hold up (especially as we found during photo shoots), mix marshmallow crème into your meringue recipe. Also, be sure to keep eggs at room temperature for greater volume in meringues. Kathi also uses a sprinkle of her own special spice blend in almost all of her pie recipes.

“GLORY BE” SWEET POTATO PIE WITH MARSHMALLOW MERINGUE

Courtesy of The Cotillion Southern Café

- 1 9 1/2-inch pastry crust
- 3 tablespoons butter, melted
- 2 large eggs
- 1 can condensed milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 can Glory Foods Sweet Potato Casserole
- 1 teaspoon fresh grated nutmeg

MARSHMALLOW MERINGUE

- 3 large egg whites
- ½ teaspoon vanilla
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup sugar

Preheat the oven to 400°F. In a large bowl, combine all of the ingredients, and mix until well blended. Pour into the prepared crust. Bake for 10 minutes and reduce the oven to 300°F. Bake for 45–55 minutes or until a knife inserted into the middle comes out clean.

Whip until foamy. Add sugar slowly, 1 tablespoon at a time. Beat until stiff peaks form and sugar dissolves. Add 17-ounce jar or Marshmallow Creme in 3 parts, whipping 1 minute between additions. Pile on the middle of the pie, and grate more fresh nutmeg all over the meringue. Turn oven back up to 400°F. Bake for about 10 minutes or until the meringue is golden brown.



HOOCHIE MAMA PIE

Courtesy of The Cotillion Southern Café

- 1 9 1/2-inch pastry crust
- 1 cup buttermilk
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, melted
- 2½ cups sugar
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 cup coconut
- 1 cup pecans, chopped
- 6 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon fresh grated nutmeg

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large bowl, combine all of the ingredients, and mix until well blended. Pour into the prepared crust. Grate fresh nutmeg on top and bake for 45–55 minutes or until the middle is set.



LEVEE HIGH APPLE PIE



COTILLION COCONUT MERINGUE PIE

Courtesy of
The Cotillion
Southern Café

CRUST:
1½ cups coconut cookies, crushed
2 tablespoons sugar
4-5 tablespoons butter, melted

Preheat oven to 350°F. Make crust, and press it unto a 9- or 9 1/2-inch pie plate. Bake for 8-10 minutes or until lightly browned.

FILLING:
¾ cup sugar
3 tablespoons cornstarch
¼ teaspoon salt
2½ cups milk
2 large egg yolks, beaten
½ cup butter
½ teaspoon vanilla
1½ cups coconut

Combine sugar, cornstarch and salt. Gradually add 2 1/2 cups milk. Cook, and stir over medium-high heat until it boils; remove from heat. Pour 1/4 milk mixture into two large egg yolks, beaten. Pour the egg mixture into the rest of the hot milk mixture. Cook and stir over medium heat for 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and add butter, vanilla and coconut. Pour into pie crust.

MERINGUE:
4 large egg whites
¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
½ cup sugar
2 tablespoons coconut

In a mixer, beat egg whites and cream of tartar at high speed until foamy. Gradually add sugar 1 tablespoon at a time. Beat until stiff peaks form and sugar dissolves. Pour meringue over the filling, sealing the edges. Sprinkle with coconut. Sprinkle crushed cookies around the sides of the pie. Bake at 450°F for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown.

NOTE: This pie is also good with a pastry crust. If you don't like meringue, try 1 cup heavy cream and 1/4 cup confectioners sugar. This makes it coconut cream pie.



“A Texas tradition since 1888.”

MILLICAN PECAN COMPANY
PECANCOMPANY.COM

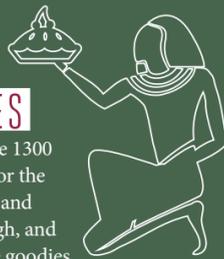
Sometimes, you just want something the way you remember it being served from your grandmother's table. For me, that is pecan pie.

Nothing says Southern tradition more than a pecan pie. And tradition is what the Millican Pecan Company is all about. In 1888, E.E. Risien founded the West Texas Pecan Nursery at the junction of the San Saba and Colorado Rivers in the heart of Texas Hill Country. His great-great grandson Winston Millican returned home to San Saba after college with his wife, Kristin, in 2002 to establish the Millican Pecan Company, which produces more than 30 different dessert items including 10,000 pecan pies a year.

Winston's great-great grandfather counted England's

HISTORY OF PIES

Pies have been around since 1300 B.C., if not before. Bakers for the pharaohs used nuts, honey and fruits in spiral-shaped dough, and drawings of these primitive goodies



SECRET TIP: Use pecan shells for mulch around garden and flower beds. Master gardeners swear by the long-lasting, attractive and dark shells that keep moisture in the ground. Millican even sells them by the bag.

were found on the walls of King Ramses II. The Greeks continued the idea by wrapping meat in a flour and water paste in order to seal in the juices. The Romans preferred to wrap sweets in their pastries, but the tradition of meat pies continued throughout most of Europe.

In fact, forget that image of early pilgrims eating pumpkin pie at their first Thanksgiving in 1621. The Pilgrims made meat-based pies and used

cinnamon, pepper and nutmeg as preservatives. The first pumpkin pie was mentioned in an English cookbook in 1675, and it did not become popular in America until the early 1800s.

As America grew westward, pie crusts were used to showcase local ingredients especially the fruits found in a certain area.

Source: everythingpies.com

Queen Victoria, Lord Alfred Tennyson and cereal company giant C.W. Post among his customers. Winston's fans include entertaining maven Martha Stewart and the thousands of people who have read about him in *Southern Living*, *Bon Appetit* or heard about him on the Food Network.

Millican Pecan Company is right in the heart of the Pecan Capital of the World—the Texas Hill Country. The United States supplies 80 percent of the world's pecans and most of those come from Texas.

“A good pecan has a crisp texture, oily flavor and a sweet after taste,” says Winston.

Texas pecans seem to fit that description, especially those in the Millican Pecan Pies, which sell for \$21.75 plus shipping. The distinctive hand-pinched crusts certainly add a homemade look and feel to the pies, which are shipped ready to eat.

“There are no corners on pies.”

MIKE'S PIES
MIKESPIES.COM

A quest for The Yearling Restaurant's sour orange pie led me in an unexpected direction: south to Tampa where a former University of Kentucky linebacker turned his passion for pies into a multi-million dollar business.

When Mike Martin was in college, he missed his mom's pies so much that she taught him how to bake his own, often using recipes that had been his grandmother's. He regularly gave pies as gifts to neighbors and friends, and those recipients eventually became his customers when he founded Mike's Pies in 1992. The company grew, and today, Mike's Pies creates desserts for restaurants across the country, including The Yearling in Cross Creek.

“Mike uses only the best ingredients, and the quality can't be beat,” says Robert Blauer, owner of The Yearling. “Although we don't make the orange pie in house any longer, Mike's version is still our most popular pie with customers.”

While Mike's Orange Blossom Pie is a favorite in Cross Creek, it's his Killer Key Lime that most people know. In fact, if you've been to any of Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville restaurants, chances are you've tasted the top-selling pie for Mike's Pies.

“Margaritaville, as well as most of the restaurants in the Keys, offers our Key lime pie,” says Mike, who grew up in Melbourne. “The pie has won four national championships, and we like to think we were partly responsible for Key lime becoming Florida's official state pie.”

In 2006, when the Florida Legislature was voting for a state pie, a Key lime pie from Mike's Pies was put on every legislator's desk. The perfectly blended sweet and tart concoction simply transcended politics.

“The Key Lime Pie hits you right in your sweet spot,” says Mike. “It's been our No. 1 seller for years.”

Mike's Pies are made from scratch and do not contain preservatives, fillers or any artificial ingredients. He likes to say he doesn't cut corners because there are no corners on pies.

The gourmet pies on his website are \$79.95, which includes priority overnight shipping.



KILLER KEY LIME PIE



ORANGE BLOSSOM PIE

Photos courtesy Mike's Pies

“Apple and pecan pies travel well.”

STELLA'S MODERN PANTRY
STELLASMODERNPANTRY.COM

Stella's Modern Pantry is the go-to store for a lot more than pies and pastry; although, desserts are a special draw this time of year. Co-owner and pastry chef Albert Barrett has been busy making the best-selling pumpkin and chocolate bourbon pecan pie throughout November.

Stella's pumpkin pie can best be described as a work of art. While the filling is basic, the homemade whipped cream is a picture-perfect sphere of exquisitely placed tufts of cream and handmade chocolate leaves.

Now that it's December, Stella's apple-cranberry will be tops on many customers' lists. It is a deep dish crumb pie that even cake fans will love.

Open since October 2009, Stella's Modern Pantry is the lifelong dream of owner Stacey Atsides. She wanted to incorporate all the items needed for creative cooking and entertaining.

“Repeatedly, I found myself traveling out of town for specialty provisions,” says Stacey. “Albert and I really felt a need to bring high-quality pastry, cheese, wine and gourmet food products to the Ocala area.”

In addition to being a gourmand's delight, Stella's also offers a large selection of kitchen tools and gadgets for any well-equipped kitchen.

The store is also a tribute to Stacey's late mother, Stephanie Atsides, who passed away in 2008.

“Stella was a favorite pet name for her,” explains Stacey. “She loved the food industry and had aspired to open a store with Albert and me.”

The top-selling chocolate bourbon pecan pie is also one of Stacey's favorites along with peach pie. Albert is a cream pie fan, loving both coconut and banana. When it comes to gift-giving, however, they say you can't beat apple or pecan pies.

“They travel well and hold up without being refrigerated,” says Stacey. **CS**



PUMPKIN PIE



APPLE-CRANBERRY PIE

SECRET TIP:

Never over sweeten your pie. Taste the flavors of all the components, not just the sugar.

