

## Improved Apple Pie (dairy-free)

Make the crust at least an hour before so it has time to chill. Some say to chill it overnight and it will be better. If you have time, do it.

Ingredients for the Crust:

1 1/2 cups of all-purpose flour plus extra for your hands  
1 stick of Earth Balance (cold from the fridge but not frozen)  
1 or 2 tablespoons cold water, mixed with 1 teaspoon orange juice or other acid — plain white vinegar works too  
1 pinch of salt  
1 teaspoon sugar (if desired, this is optional)

Put the dry ingredients in a big bowl. Use a pastry cutter or two knives to cut the Earth Balance into the flour until the particles are about the size of peas. Add a little bit of your cold water/OJ combo and mix with your hands until dough is formed. Too dry? Add more water. Too wet? Sprinkle a bit more flour. You are aiming for the consistency of Play-Doh. For my purposes (press crust) you just need a big ball. But don't play with it! Overworked crust isn't tender-tasting.

Take a 9 inch pie pan and lightly oil and flour it. This is new this year — but I discovered it makes it a whole lot easier to get the pie out afterwards.

Once your pie pan is prepared, put the dough ball in your floured pan. Flour your hands to keep from sticking to the dough and press it flat, making sure to get it up the sides. Try to get the crust as even as possible. Cover with plastic wrap and put in the fridge.

Ingredients for filling:

2 - 3 cups of cut up apples (some green plus whatever you have in the house, but not too mealy)  
2 tablespoons of rum  
3 tablespoons of honey  
3 tablespoons of maple syrup  
1 cup turbinado or brown sugar  
1/2 cup lemon juice or orange juice  
1 pinch salt  
1 tablespoon cinnamon  
1 teaspoon nutmeg

Peel and cut up about 2 cups worth of apples into bite-sized chunks. Discard cores. I usually use whatever apples I have on hand but mixing in green apples that are closer to their quince ancestors and more pectin-y means you don't have to bother with thickeners in your filling. I have never even heard of using corn starch or even flour in an apple pie filling because my Mom always used Granny Smiths -- but I read that people do it. Don't. Green apples will solve this problem. Make sure the apples are fairly fresh. You want some texture. If the apples are already soft, use them to make homemade apple sauce instead or apple butter.

Here's a new step my Mom never did. Put all of your ingredients in a microwave-safe bowl and nuke them until the sugar is dissolved and the apples are starting to get soft. Alternatively, do what [Cooks Illustrated](#) says and cook them in a dutch oven and then remove them and cool them flat in large pan with sides. I have already registered my disgust at their need to dirty everything in your kitchen. No need to do it again here!

Preheat the oven to 375.

Once the filling is cool (which it will do just fine in your microwave-safe bowl) pour it into your chilled crust. At this point you could opt for a [streusel topping](#) or roll out a sheet of pastry to put on top (which was what I did at Thanksgiving). If you add a top crust, sprinkle it with turbinado sugar before baking and be sure to prick the top with a fork multiple times before baking. In good

news, the pre-cooked filling probably won't bubble out and make a mess of your oven but put a baking sheet underneath when you put the pie in the oven just in case. Every apple is different.

Bake your pie for about an hour, covering it with foil if the crust starts to burn. As I mentioned above, pre-cooked filling isn't as lively as the other kind, so your pie will be ready when the crust is golden brown and the whole thing looks firm.