



ANSON MILLS

Essential All-Butter Pastry 2.0

Yield

One 9-inch pie crust or one 9- to 10-inch tart crust

Time

About 40 minutes to make the dough (including 30 minutes to chill the butter), 8 to 24 hours to chill the dough, and about 35 minutes to roll it out and bake

Baking Remarks

We confessed elsewhere in these pages that we highly regard the *oeuvre* of Rose Levy Beranbaum, particularly her cake and pastry formulas. Recently we had a look at her basic flaky pastry and noticed that *she*, French training notwithstanding, skips right past sprinkling water on the dry ingredients as they sit in a pile on the counter, and the even messier process of *fraisage* in which the flour and fat are smeared together on the counter with the heel of the hand, a technique that is thought to produce flaky layers. Instead, she gets it all done in the food processor! Granted, her method requires freezing and then processing two different batches of butter for the same dough, but it is worth it.

The first batch of butter is processed straight into the flour; the second batch is also processed, but to larger chunks. The water is then fed straight into the processor. Be aware that the dough will *not* come together in a ball. Instead, it will have a particle look that succumbs to pressure from a squeeze in a fist. You will be able to literally *grasp* that it has enough moisture. Turn it out and press to a disk.

For the flakiest results, after processing, if the dough is too dry to hold together, toss in as little additional water as possible, but don't fret if a few more teaspoons are necessary. Weather, time of year, the condition of your flour—these are all factors that can influence water requirements. Once the dough has rested, it should be completely hydrated.

European-style butter, which has a higher fat percentage than average butter is absolutely essential to the success of this recipe.

Anson Mills flours are “alive.” In the context of pie dough—which contains liquid and fat—this means the pastry flour may begin to oxidize, or form grayish streaks, if the dough languishes in the refrigerator for longer than a day. These streaks do not affect the performance of flavor of the pastry. We tested it. But the best way to work with this recipe is to roll out the pastry and bake it no more than 24 hours after putting the dough disk in the refrigerator. Or freeze it for up to 2 weeks, defrost it, roll it out, and bake it promptly.

To get a superior bottom crust on a pie—any pie, but particularly a pie whose filling begins as a liquid, like custard—a pizza stone is essential. (If you don't own one, buy one. You will not regret it.) The crust needs to be blind baked on the stone to become set before it's assaulted by a wet filling.

Equipment Mise en Place

To make the pastry, you will need a digital kitchen scale, two small bowls, two liquid measuring cups, a food processor, a large bowl (if needed), parchment paper, a rolling pin, a 9-inch pie plate or a 9- or 10-inch tart pan with a removable bottom, a pizza stone, heavy-duty aluminum foil, and 4 cups of pie weights or dried beans.

Ingredients

4.5 ounces cold unsalted European-style unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch cubes

6.5 ounces Anson Mills Colonial Style Fine Cloth-Bolted Pastry Flour, frozen, plus additional for rolling out the dough

A handful of ice cubes

2 to 3 ounces spring or filtered water

Scant ½ teaspoon fine sea salt

Directions

1. Divide the butter into 2 small bowls, one with 2 ounces of butter, the other with 2.5 ounces. Cover each bowl with plastic wrap and place them in the freezer for 30 minutes.
2. After the butter has chilled for 30 minutes, drop a large handful of ice cubes into a liquid measuring cup and fill the cup with the water; set aside to allow the water to chill. Meanwhile, turn the frozen flour into a food processor, add the salt, and pulse a couple of times to combine. Working quickly, set a second measuring cup on a digital kitchen scale, tare the scale, and pour in 1.8 ounces of ice water, taking only the water and none of the ice; set the remaining ice water aside. Scatter the larger amount of chilled butter over the flour in the food processor and pulse until the butter pieces are fine-ish and the mixture looks a bit pebbly, about ten 1-second pulses. Scatter the remaining butter over the flour-butter mixture and pulse until the butter is mixed in but is still in large chunks, about five 10-second pulses. With the machine running, pour the ice water through the feed tube; once all the water has been added, let the machine run for just 2 or 3 seconds more. The mixture will look fine and granular, and the butter will be in fine bits, but it will not have come together into a cohesive dough. Squeeze a bit of it in your palm—it should hold together and not crumble apart if pressed or prodded. If the dough does not hold together or if it crumbles easily, dump the mixture into a large bowl, sprinkle in an additional 1 teaspoon or so of ice water, and fluff the mixture your fingers to incorporate the water. Test again by squeezing a bit of the dough. If needed, sprinkle and fluff in additional water; the dough should not require more than a total of 1 tablespoon additional ice water.
3. Turn the dough particles onto a large sheet of plastic wrap. Press and squeeze the pile into a compact mound, then flatten into a disk. Wrap the disk tightly in the plastic and refrigerate for at least 8 hours, or up to overnight.
4. Unwrap the dough, place it on a lightly floured sheet of parchment paper, lightly flour the top, and pound it with a rolling pin to flatten it while retaining its round form. Place a second sheet of parchment on top. Using the rolling pin, roll out the dough to a 12- to 13-inch round, flipping it in its parchment sandwich as necessary and lifting the paper to prevent the dough from sticking. Lightly flour the rolling pin, wrap the dough around it, then unroll the dough onto a 9-inch pie pan or a 9- to 10-inch tart pan with a removable bottom. Lift the edges of the dough and ease it into the corners of

the pan. If using a pie pan, trim the edges, then crimp or flute them; if using a tart pan, gently press the dough into the fluted sides of the pan, then use a paring knife to trim the excess dough so that the edge is flush with the rim of the pan. With a fork, poke evenly spaced sets of holes on bottom of the dough. Refrigerate the dough-lined pan until the dough is firm, at least 1 hour or up to 2 hours. Adjust an oven rack to the lowest position. Place a pizza stone on the rack and heat the oven to 400 degrees; allow the pizza stone to heat for at least 1 hour.

5. Line the chilled dough-lined pan with a sheet of aluminum foil, allowing ample overhang. Pour 4 cups of pie weights or dried beans into the foil. Slide the pan directly onto the pizza stone and bake for 25 minutes. Carefully remove the pan from the oven, lift out the foil and weights, then return the pan to the pizza stone. Continue to bake until the pastry is set and golden brown, about 5 minutes.