

VODKA PIE CRUST

By Judy Kim | Yield: Two 8 to 10-inch single-crust pies or one double-crust pie

I've been working on this recipe for years and love the results. It's been rewritten and improved every few months. It's particularly great for decorative pies or anyone new to pie making because the vodka makes it very pliable. By using both butter and shortening, it creates a silky consistency. Vodka may seem to be the star, which does help reduce the formation of gluten, but I think technique reigns supreme for success. The key is evenly distributed butter and flour, which is easy to control in a food processor if you use the pulse feature. Big butter chunks may seem ideal, but they create an unevenly textured pie. For another simple dough I prefer to make by hand, try my [Buttermilk Pie Dough](#).

INGREDIENTS

12 tablespoons unsalted butter (1 ½ sticks), cut into ½-inch cubes and frozen in advance
½ cup vodka
2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon kosher salt
2 tablespoons shortening, frozen

DIRECTIONS

1. Pour vodka into a liquid measuring cup, then add several ice cubes. Wait until vodka is chilled and remove ice after a few minutes. Vodka water mixture should reach ¾ cup measurement. (If you prefer to use less vodka, try ⅓ cup vodka with ¼ cup ice water.)
2. Combine flour and salt in a large mixing bowl; add frozen butter and shortening. Toss together quickly with your hands to coat each piece of butter and shortening with flour mixture, helps ensure an even dough. Transfer to the bowl of a food processor fitted with a steel blade; pulse 2 to 3 times until the size of chick peas.
3. Pour vodka mixture through feed tube in a steady stream while constantly pulsing until dough begins to pull together. Avoid running the machine automatically or it may overmix. Butter and shortening should be about the size of dried lentils. Pro tip: Pour all the liquid into the feed tube, it's designed to stream an even amount and will help absorb all the flour evenly if you keep pulsing.
4. Carefully turn dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and remove the blade. The dough is very hydrated, so use bench flour when needed. Working on marble or granite countertop will help keep the dough cool. Knead dough until smooth, turn 5 to 6 times.
5. Divide dough in half. Wrap each half in plastic wrap and shape the dough into a round or rectangle. I find the dough will stay cooler if it's shape after wrapping and it reduces the need for additional bench flour. If you are using a round pie dish, shape dough into a flattened disk or rectangle if you are making a galette or lattice strips; this will help eliminate wastage. Refrigerate for minimum of 30 minutes, preferably overnight.
6. You can freeze the dough up to 3 months, just wrap well. If you have left over scraps I cut them into manageable pieces and wrap them in parchment paper and stack the pieces. The parchment will prevent them from sticking. Wrap in plastic wrap tightly and freeze to use for cut outs on a future pie. Or cut out decorative pieces using a pie cutter and freeze in a single layer, when frozen solid keep in air tight plastic container.

NOTES FOR DECORATIVE PIES:

If you desire a decorative pie using cut out shapes, try purchasing pie cutters at a local specialty store, [Williams Sonoma](#) or [online](#) such as Amazon . Cookie cutters are another favorite. Generally I prefer pie cutters since they give a detailed impression mark due to their plunger design. The texture will give a rich detail to your pie.

Using pie cutters is a great way to use excess dough. Keep pastry cut outs in the freezer and bake them off as needed. Brushing with cream or an egg wash will make them golden. I suggest using them for a topping on desserts like ice cream or berries with whipped cream. I've even been known to put them with skillet eggs and arugula.

If you want to layer a lot of cut outs on your pie such as a fallen leaf layout, roll the dough a bit thinner since they will overlap. Cut out the shapes and place in a single layer on a parchment lined quarter sheet pan or any tray that will fit in the freezer. Once frozen use the them right away or stack the shapes into an airtight container for future use. The shapes can be scattered all over a fruit pie in place of a top crust.

For a custard pie that requires blind baking, create the pie cut outs a few hours in advance or the day before and freeze them solid. This will help them resist heat to maintain their shape and placement while baking. Roll the bottom layer 1/8-inch thick, place into a pie dish and trim neatly with scissors or a sharp paring knife. The shapes can be attached to a simple crust and form a wreath by brushing the backside with heavy cream. Freeze pie crust for about 5 to 10 minutes before blind baking. Pro tip preheat oven with [Baking Steel](#) or your favorite pizza stone. There's no need to blind bake the pie! Place your pie dish on top of a rimmed sheet pan and place on top of the Baking Steel, and your bottom crust is be crispy. Eliminating blind baking is a huge time saver. I bake all my regular and custard pies on the steel, I just left it in the oven.

* recipe updated August 2018