

Mock Apple Pie

If you've never made it, mock apple pie is one of those surprises that can fool an unsuspecting eater. Made with crackers instead of apples, it has a similar texture to the real thing, and the sugar and spices are convincing enough—adding the sweetness, sourness, and flavors associated with apple pie—that you can hoodwink someone who's familiar with the real thing into thinking that's what they're eating. It's a great example of how the sensation from a combination of odors, combined with expectation, can trick the brain.

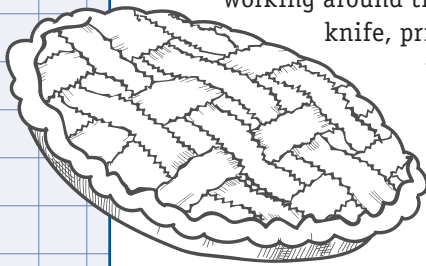
Line a pie pan with **pie dough**—see page 259 for a double-crust recipe, or cheat and buy a commercially prepared one, making sure to get a double crust (one that has a second part for the top of the pie).

In a saucepan, add **1½ cups (360 mL) water**, **2 cups (400g) sugar**, and **2 teaspoons (6g) cream of tartar**. Bring the mixture to a boil and then reduce the heat to medium, letting the syrup simmer until it is slightly thick, around 235–240°F / 113–115°C. Remove the pan from the heat and allow it to cool for a few minutes.

To the pan, add **30 (100g) buttery crackers** (Ritz brand is the most commonly used, but saltine or soda crackers work too), **1 teaspoon (3g) cinnamon**, **1 teaspoon (5 mL) vanilla**, **¼ teaspoon (0.5g) nutmeg**, **2½ tablespoons (38 mL) lemon juice**, and the **zest from 1 lemon**. Gently stir to mix the ingredients together, but don't overmix—the crackers need to remain in large pieces.

Pour the mixture onto the pie dough. Cut up **2 tablespoons (30g) butter** into small cubes and sprinkle them over the filling. Dust the mixture with a few pinches of cinnamon.

Place the top crust on the pie and pinch the edges of it into the bottom crust, working around the entire circumference. Using either a fork or a sharp knife, prick or slice the top crust a dozen times in a regular pattern, which will give steam a place to vent while the pie cooks.



Bake the pie in a preheated oven at 425°F / 220°C for about 30 minutes, until the crust is golden brown. Serve it warm (reheat in the microwave as necessary), ideally *à la mode* with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

What is cream of tartar?

It's mostly potassium bitartrate, originally a byproduct of making wine. It also has a sour taste, and adds to mock apple pie a lot of the acidic bite that normally comes from things like malic acid in real apples. Cream of tartar doesn't smell like apple—none of the odorants are present—but the taste of sourness is about right to fool you.