

cranberry mini-pies topped with walnut streusel

recipe: adapted slightly from Better Homes and Gardens'
Holiday Baking Issue 2012

Yields 10 mini-pies.

For the streusel:

- 1/4 cup chopped walnuts, toasted
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons rolled oats
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
- 3 tablespoons cold butter, chopped into small pieces

For the pastry:

- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 3 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup all-purpose flour

For the filling:

- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1 cup fresh or frozen cranberries
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/4 cup pure maple syrup

Mise en place - begin by getting organized. Measure out all of your ingredients. Toast the walnuts in a dry skillet over medium heat until golden and fragrant (about 3-5 minutes) and allow to cool. Place the ingredients for the filling in a small saucepan so you can make the pie filling while the pastry is baking.

Preheat oven to 325°F.

Make the streusel topping by combining the toasted walnuts, brown sugar, flour, rolled oats, salt, cinnamon and cold butter in a small bowl. Rub the ingredients together with your fingers (or a fork) until it resembles coarse crumbs. Set aside.

In a mixing bowl with a hand mixer or in the bowl of your stand mixer, beat together the 1/2 cup butter and cream cheese on medium speed until smooth. Stir in the 1 cup flour until combined. Divide the dough into 10 equal portions (about 1 ounce each). Form each portion into a ball. Using your fingers, lightly press the dough balls from the centre outward into the bottom and up the sides of 10 ungreased wells of a standard sized muffin pan (2.5 inch diameter). Bake for 15 minutes (the pastry may shrink slightly as it bakes). Do not turn the oven off when you are finished baking - you will be returning your pies to the oven shortly.

While the pastry is baking, make the filling. In a small saucepan over medium heat, stir together the sugar, cornstarch, cranberries, water and maple syrup. Cook until thickened and bubbly, mashing the cranberries slightly as they cook. Be careful - you don't want to spray hot cranberry juice on your skin. The filling should be thick and jam-like. Set aside.

When the pastry is finished baking, remove from the oven and immediately spoon the filling into the hot pastry cups. Sprinkle the streusel topping over the filling, dividing it equally between the cups.

Bake for 25-30 minutes until the tops are golden and the filling is bubbly. Cool in the muffin pan on a wire rack for 5 minutes. Carefully remove the pies from the muffin wells (a small pallet knife works well for releasing them), and allow to continue cooling on the wire rack.

Serving suggestion: warm, with a scoop of ice cream and a dusting of cinnamon.