

## APPLE DESSERTS

Last Saturday I was one of the judges at the Apple Bake-Off at the Amador County Farmers Market in Sutter Creek. As I explained to my fellow judge, Matt Andrae of Andrae's Bakery in Sutter Creek, getting to do something like this is one of the definite perks of the Hometown Kitchen. All the entries were delicious, but we both agreed that a simple apple cake, moist and light, with the walnuts toasted before being added to the batter, was the clear winner.

And that got me thinking—it's getting to be apple time. I love apple desserts, including a good old fashioned apple pie, which was the second-place winner. Everybody's got their favorite recipe for apple pie, and you all probably make a better crust than I do. Our apple pies are all descendants of the French comfort food dessert, a basic apple tarte. Here is one recipe, although the technique for making the crust is a little different than you normally see.

For the dough, you'll need 1 ¼ cup of all-purpose flour, one large egg, broken into a bowl and beaten with a fork, 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened, 3 tablespoons vegetable shortening, such as Crisco, a pinch of salt, 1 tablespoon of sugar, 1 teaspoon of baking powder, and two tablespoons of hot milk. For the filling, you'll need 4 large Golden Delicious apples, about 2 pounds, 3 tablespoons sugar, and 2 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, broken into pieces.

Preheat your oven to 425 degrees. Put all the dough ingredients except the hot milk into a large bowl. Stir well with a wooden spoon until the mixture starts to combine. Add the hot milk and stir until it is well mixed. Do not overwork the dough, which will be very soft. Place the dough in a 9-inch pie plate or a fluted metal quiche pan, and using your fingers and a little extra flour to keep your fingers from sticking, press the dough into the pan until it covers the bottom and sides.

Peel, core and halve the apples. Cut each half into 1 ½ inch wedges. Arrange the wedges on the dough like the spokes of a wheel. Sprinkle the apples with the 3 tablespoons of sugar and dot with the 2 tablespoons of butter. Bake in your 425 degree oven for about an hour, or until the crust is golden.

If you like, make a glaze with a couple of tablespoons of apricot jam thinned with a couple of teaspoons of brandy and spoon the glaze over the apples after it has baked. Serve lukewarm. This serves 4-6 people.

You'll notice there is no cinnamon or allspice or clove, staples of American apple pies. When making an American apple pie, you need to have a very light hand with the spices; otherwise you can easily overwhelm the taste of the apples.

Another quick and easy traditional country apple dessert takes 4 Golden Delicious apples, cored and the skin peeled off the top third of the apples only. By the way, Golden Delicious are excellent all-purpose eating and cooking apples. Preheat your oven to 400 degrees. Arrange 4 slices of bread in a single layer in a gratin dish. I like to use a whole-grain bread with nuts for this, but any country bread will be fine. Except sourdough—not for dessert.

Place an apple, peeled side up, in the center of each slice. Place a sprig of mint in the hole in the center of each apple. Divide 1 ½ tablespoons of unsalted butter among the apples, placing a piece of butter on top of the mint. In a small bowl, mix together ¼ cup apricot jam with 2 tablespoons of grenadine syrup (which you can find in the liquor section of the supermarket) with ½ cup water. Pour this mixture over the apples and sprinkle the apples with 2 tablespoons of sugar and 3 tablespoons of pine nuts.

Bake the apples in the 400 degree oven for an hour or a little more, until the apples are very tender and browned on top. Don't let them get too dark. Cool and serve lukewarm or even at room temperature. This serves 4, and you can top each portion with whipped cream if you like. If you don't have any grenadine, use some pomegranate juice that is now widely available.

Look for these recipes on our website, [www.htradio.net](http://www.htradio.net). Just click on the link to the Hometown Kitchen. This is Steve Muni for the Hometown Kitchen.