



# apple of our eye

You just can't improve on the perfection of classic apple pie.

Or can you? **By Charlie Baggs**

## the original

Apple pie is the quintessential American dessert, equally at home after an autumn hay ride as it is at a July 4 barbecue. It offers foundation flavor that is both historical and cultural.

The earliest version of apple pie dates back to the time of Chaucer, 1381. It called for "gode applys, gode spycis and figys and reysons and perys," a medley of sweet fruits that required little refined sugar, which was extremely expensive at the time. Saffron was used to enhance the

color. And cloves and cinnamon have always been used to add warmth of flavor. Ice cream, double cream or custards were served with either hot or cold apple pie.

## the analysis

For the gold standard (\$3.95, recipe, p. 113), the filling is primarily a well-balanced combination of crisp, acidic apples, such as Granny Smith or Bramley, and warm spices like clove and cinnamon. Sugar and lemon juice are added to balance the flavors and stimulate the palate.

Creating a flaky crust is critical to achieving the right mouthfeel. Using chilled butter and mixing the crust dough to the right consistency is crucial. Skin the apples for a better consistency and less fibrous texture.

Testing different varieties of apples for sweetness and tartness is helpful. Once you have an ultimate flavor in mind you can make adjustments for sweetness with sugar, honey or molasses. A touch of lemon juice makes the sugar or sweetness brighter. Try adding a lemon or orange zest to boost the citrus notes.

## the results

Once the gold standard is achieved, the culinary possibilities are endless. A few additional flavor components are all that's needed to create an entirely new dish. For example, adding a quality goat cheese for a goat cheese and apple tart (\$5.95, recipe, below) is a perfect way to create a cravable, signature flavor that will increase the dish's perceived value.

Or, for a total departure, add ground, seasoned veal, mushrooms and cheese in a layer to create a savory hunter's apple

pie (\$8.95, recipe, p. 52) that is perfect addition to any winter menu. Parmesan, Brie or, this case, Cheddar, all go well with the caramelized apple flavors and help this version work well as an entrée.

These products are very versatile and mix well with other flavors. The crusty texture and the warm filling are a perfect fit for great mouthfeel. ♦

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### Goat cheese apple tart

Executive Chef Charlie Baggs,  
Charlie Baggs Inc., Chicago

Yield: 1 10-inch tart, 8 servings

Menu price: \$5.95;  
food cost/serving: \$1.20

Flour	2 1/4 C
Sugar	1/2 C, plus 2/3 C
Cinnamon	1 TBS
Nutmeg	1/2 tsp
Ground ginger	1 tsp
Butter, well-chilled, sliced	8 Oz
Egg yolk	2 each
Heavy cream	2 TBS
Goat cheese	11 Oz
Cream cheese	7 Oz
Eggs, beaten	3 each
Half-and-half	3 Oz
Granny Smith apples, sliced	3 each
Cinnamon sugar	as needed
Apricot jam	1/2 C
Water	3 TBS

1. Combine flour, 1/2 cup sugar, tablespoon cinnamon, nutmeg and ground ginger in a large bowl of an electric mixer fitted with paddle attachment. Add butter and mix on

medium speed until mixture resembles a fine meal.

2. Whisk together egg yolks and cream. With machine running, pour into dry ingredients. Process dough only until it just comes together.

3. Remove dough from machine, wrap in plastic and roll into a 1/2-inch disk. Reserve to rest for at least 1 hour.

4. Cream together cheeses and 2/3 cup sugar in an electric mixer fitted with paddle attachment. Add eggs and half-and-half; mix for a few minutes. Pour into a bowl, cover and reserve, refrigerated.

5. Roll dough into a 12-inch circle and lay over a 10-inch fluted tart pan. Carefully press dough into pan and cut away excess. Reserve to rest for 1/2 hour.

6. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Pierce tart shell with a fork and blind bake for about 20 minutes.

7. Pour goat cheese filling into shell almost to top. Arrange sliced apples decoratively on top. Sprinkle with cinnamon sugar and bake for 15-20 minutes until filling is set.

Glaze with a mixture of apricot jam and water and cool to room temperature.

Note: After glazing, any kind of roasted and ground nuts can be used to decorate the edge of the tart. Pears would be a great substitution for the apples.

## Hunter's savory apple pie

*Executive Chef Charlie Baggs,  
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*Yield: 8 servings, 1 9-inch pie*

*Menu price: \$8.95; food cost/serving: 26%*

Pie crust, prepared 1 each

Butter, sweet cream 1/4 C

Ground veal 1 Lb

Domestic mushrooms 1/2 Lb

Portabello mushrooms,  
dried, reconstituted 1/2 C

Shiitake mushrooms, sliced 1 C

Chanterelles, sliced 1/2 C

Onion, medium, diced 1 each

Garlic cloves 1/4 C

Granny Smith apples,  
small dice 1 C

Butternut squash,  
roasted, diced 1 C

Red bell peppers,  
roasted, julienned 1/4 C

Fresh sage leaves 12 each

Kosher salt and freshly  
ground black pepper to taste

Wisconsin white Cheddar  
cheese, shredded 1 C

Bacon lardons 1/4 C

Scallions, chopped 1/4 C



1. Blind-bake pie crust in a 350 degree F oven.

2. Heat butter in a pan and sauté veal until starting to caramelize. Add mushrooms, onions, garlic, apples, squash and peppers and cook until onions are translucent.

3. Add sage leaves and toss mixture. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

4. Mound mixture into pie crust until it is 1 inch over top. Add generous portion of cheese, bacon lardons and scallions. Bake until the top is starting to turn golden brown and center is warm, about 30 minutes. Serve with a sauce appropriate to complement flavors and sautéed Swiss chard.