

# On Apple Pie: An Essay in Practical Semantics

*(with acknowledgements to Jamie Oliver)*

Dafydd Gibbon, 2006-02-24



I hope you enjoy baking this pie as much as I did in November 2005. It's not hard. And, course, I hope you enjoy eating it - I assure you that it is the most delicious apple pie I have ever eaten (except for my Welsh grandma's apple pie with home-grown apples and home-ground flour).

This apple pie is based on a recipe by Jamie Oliver, which I found on the web somewhere (in a German translation!). I sincerely hope that I am not infringing copyright by distributing it, but the translation is my enhanced reverse translation into English of somebody else's translation of an English original into German, so maybe Jamie will forgive me. I hope that my reverse translation bears some resemblance to the original, though it contains additional information the reader who may not be familiar with the ancient art of pie-making. And, of course, you, the reader, by the very act of reading this, solemnly promise not to distribute the recipe any further.

Americans think that Apple Pie is American, and eat it with ice-cream, artificial cheese, and maybe other things, too. Well, it is American. But before that it was English and Welsh – that is, simply British – and it still is. Eaten with custard, that is a vanilla and egg yolk sauce. Apple Pie is one of the classic British desserts. Jamie Oliver's original recipe uses both cooking apples as well as eating apples. But beware: this distinction applies to English apple varieties and does not exist for continental European varieties. The nearest German variety to a cooking apple is “Boskop”, which will do fine. If you can get Brampton (the best), Rome Beauty, Baldwin, or Jonathan, do so. Some of the eating apples can be replaced by pears or blackberries. For baking, I used a French “tarte” dish since I did not have a pie-dish – see the photo above of a pie I made in November 2005 using this recipe.

**Quantity:** 6 wedge-shaped portions (or 8 for the weight-conscious).

## **Pie-crust**

225g wheat flour, extra flour for dusting the pie

140g butter

85g very finely ground sugar

grated zest of half an untreated lemon

1 pinch of salt

2 egg yolks

butter for greasing the pie-dish

## **Pie filling**

1 large cooking apple (continental near-equivalent: Boskoop)

4 eating apples (Cox, Braeburn, etc. - the tastier the better)

3 dessert spoons brown cane sugar

grated zest of half an untreated lemon

1/4 teaspoon ground ginger

1 handful of raisins or sultanas

1 egg yolk mixed with a little milk

## **Method**

Pre-heat the oven to 180°.

### *Pie-crust*

For the pie-crust prepare a short-crust pastry dough with flour, butter, sugar, lemon zest and salt. I prefer to do this by hand. Mix dry ingredients first. The butter should be very cold: cut into small pieces with a knife, and quickly rubbed with fingers and thumbs into the dry ingredients to create a grainy mixture with tiny lumps. Do this quickly so the mixture stays cool. Then add the beaten egg yolks and a small amount of water. The dough should be firm and not sticky. Grease the pie-dish with butter. The pie-dish should preferably be metal to conduct heat well and ensure that the pie-crust is crispy underneath as well as on top. The one I used was ceramic, but that did not seem to make much difference.

Separate the pastry dough into two halves and roll flat (about ½ cm thick) into rounds which are slightly bigger than the pie-dish. Put one round on the pie-dish, with plenty of overlap at the edges (for sticking to the pie-top). If the pastry breaks, just press together again and massage lightly with a little water and say this is how the traditional pies looked. Now put the pie-dish with the pastry into the fridge.

### *Pie-filling*

Peel and core the apples and cut them into eighths. Place in a small saucepan with sugar, lemon zest, ginger, dried fruit and 1 dessertspoon of water, bring to the boil and simmer for 5 minutes or until the apples are only just soft and still slightly firm, stirring the mixture. You can add a beaten egg at the end, to firm the mixture. Allow to cool completely. Feel free to use your own imagination with respect to other spices, such as cloves, but use them very sparingly.

### *Pie*

Take the pie-dish with pastry out of the fridge and fill it with the apple mixture. Moisten the edge of the pastry with the egg-yolk and milk mixture. Put the second pastry round on top, pinching the edges of the lower and upper round together with the finger-tips, making a wavy pattern. Cut off the overlapping pastry with a knife. Paint the top of the pie with the egg yolk and milk mixture (add a couple of teaspoons of brown cane sugar to this mixture if wished.) With a sharp pointed knife, cut small slits into the top of the pastry to allow steam to escape. Bake the pie for 45 minutes on the lowest oven tray until golden (about 150°C – keep an eye on the pie and don't let it get too brown).

### *Serving.*

Cut the pie into wedges and serve with custard. Apple pie is delicious at almost any time of day – lunch, afternoon tea, dinner (but would be rather unconventional for breakfast).