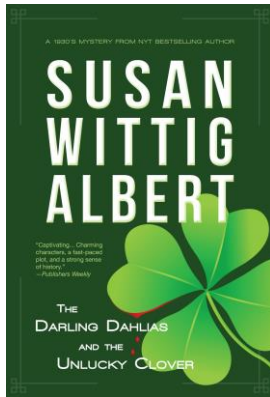


## THE DAHLIAS' PIE SUPPER RECIPES



From *The Darling Dahlias and the Unlucky Clover*

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*If there were no other reason to live in the South, Southern cooking would be enough.*--Michael Andrew Grissom, *Southern by the Grace of God*

The old-fashioned pie supper is a favorite Southern tradition. In communities where money was fairly easy to come by, each pie would be auctioned off to the highest bidder in an entertaining competition. But in many communities, it was common to sell the pies by the slice, since almost everybody could afford at least one slice.

It's easy to find recipes for apple, cherry, and peach pie. Recipes for heritage pies are a little harder to locate. Here are five of the Dahlias' favorites.

### **Aunt Hetty Little's Pecan Pie**

The first recipe for what we know as pecan pie was published in *Harper's Bazaar*, February 6, 1886, with the comment that it could be "a real state pie." There was no clue to the state, but Alabama would have been glad to claim it. Early pecan pies were made with sorghum molasses, cane syrup, or molasses, purchased out of a barrel at the general store. The pie gained national popularity in the 1920s, when the manufacturer of Karo corn syrup (which had been around since 1902) began printing the recipe on Karo cans. There is an old Southern saying that a pie should be "sweet enough to make the fillings in your teeth ache." The true Southern version of pecan pie certainly qualifies.

1 unbaked 9" pastry shell  
1 cup brown sugar  
1½ cups light corn syrup, or a mix of light and dark  
4 eggs  
¼ cup butter  
¼ cup peach brandy  
2 teaspoons vanilla  
2 cups pecans, coarsely broken

In a saucepan over medium heat, boil sugar and corn syrup together for 2 to 3 minutes; set aside to cool slightly. In a large bowl, beat eggs lightly. Slowly pour the syrup mixture into the eggs, continuing to beat. Stir in butter, vanilla, and pecans. Pour into crust. Bake at 350° F for 45 to 50 minutes, or until just set.

### **Mildred Kilgore's Lemon Icebox Pie**

Icebox pies and other no-bake desserts became popular in the 1920s, when electric refrigeration made its way into the kitchen. (Electric refrigerators were still called “iceboxes” in the 1950s and 60s.) Lemon is only one of a dozen variations, including pineapple, lime, and orange. Crusts were often made of crushed graham cracker, vanilla wafer, or gingersnap crumbs. This filling is made with sweetened condensed milk and eggs; others were made with gelatin. Evaporated milk (also called condensed milk) was a popular product before refrigerators were common in homes; sweetened condensed milk was manufactured as early as the 1850s and was very popular.

9" graham cracker or cookie shell  
2 14-ounce cans sweetened condensed milk  
1¼ cups fresh lemon juice  
2 tablespoons finely grated lemon zest  
8 large egg yolks  
Sweetened whipped cream for topping  
Lemon slices for garnish

In a medium bowl, whisk the condensed milk with the lemon juice. In a separate medium bowl, beat the egg yolks and lemon zest until pale. Gradually add the condensed milk mixture, beating until smooth. Pour the filling into the shell. Bake at 325° for 25 minutes, until the edges are set and the center jiggles only slightly. Chill for at least six hours, preferably overnight. Top with sweetened whipped cream and garnish with lemon slices. For easy cutting, use a hot knife.

### **Verna Tidwell's Shoofly Pie**

While pie for breakfast was a New England tradition, folks in the rural South enjoyed it too. Food historians tell us that Shoofly Pie began as a cake and was later baked in a pie shell so it could be eaten without a plate and fork. The pie had two versions: “wet bottom” and “dry bottom.” In the dry-bottom pie, the crumb topping is mixed into the filling and baked until the filling is firm and cake-like. In the wet-bottom pie, the filling is layered on top and the bottom is gooey, like British treacle custard. Some say the name comes from the need to shoo flies off the sweet treat, but food historian William Woys Weaver speculates that it originated with a popular 1830s circus mule named Shoofly, whose name later appeared on Shoofly Molasses. It's also possible that the word is a corruption of “soufflé,” for there is an 1837 recipe for molasses pie that is made like a soufflé, with the addition of beaten egg whites to the filling. The recipe Verna got from Bettina produces a “wet-bottom” pie.

9" unbaked pie shell  
Crumb topping  
1½ cups flour  
½ cup dark brown sugar  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
½ teaspoon nutmeg  
⅛ teaspoon salt  
1 stick (1/4 pound) cold unsalted butter  
Filling  
1 egg yolk  
¾ cup molasses  
¾ cup strong coffee  
½ teaspoon baking soda

Heat oven to 375°. Make the crumb topping: In a bowl, mix flour, sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt together in a bowl. Cut in the butter with a pastry cutter until the mixture looks like cornmeal. Make the filling: in a medium bowl, beat egg yolk with the molasses. In a saucepan, bring coffee to a boil and stir in baking soda. Beat hot mixture into molasses mixture and pour into pastry shell. Spoon the crumb mixture evenly over the top. Bake 15 minutes at 375°, lower temperature to 350°, and bake until set.

### **Miss Rogers' Vinegar Pie**

This recipe comes from the *Pure Food Cook Book*, compiled and published by the Women's Progressive Farmers' Association of Missouri in 1935—my mother's cookbook and my go-to resource for Midwestern country style cookery. Vinegar pie was a Depression-era favorite because it required only inexpensive ingredients that were likely to be already on hand. Another version (meant to taste something like apple pie) includes familiar pie spices: cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg. Lemon, maple, and vanilla extract were also commonly used, when people could afford 30 cents for a bottle.

1 baked 8" pie shell  
1 cup sugar  
2 eggs  
2 tablespoons cider vinegar  
1 cup water  
2 tablespoons flour or corn starch  
Sweetened whipped cream for garnish

Mix all ingredients. Cook and stir in double boiler, then pour into baked pie shell. Chill. Garnish with sweetened whipped cream.

### **Liz Lacy's Green Tomato Pie**

An early version of green tomato pie was contributed by a housewife identified only as Mrs. S. T. to the early cookbook *Housekeeping in Old Virginia* (1878):

Slice green tomatoes and stew in a thick syrup of sugar and lemon juice. Grate in the yellow rind of a lemon. When transparent, spread evenly over the bottom of a pie-plate that has been lined

with paste [crust]. Spread strips of pastry across or cut into ornamental leaves with a cake-cutter, place over the fruit and bake.

During the Southern summer or whenever apples were not available, green tomatoes were a popular substitute. Here is Liz's 1934 version of this traditional pie.

2 9" unbaked pie crusts for top and bottom  
3/4 cup sugar  
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
3 tablespoons cornstarch  
Zest of 1 lemon  
2 pounds green tomatoes, sliced 1/4" thick  
1/2 cup golden raisins  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
4 tablespoons butter

In a large bowl, mix sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, salt, cornstarch, and lemon zest. Dredge tomato slices in the sugar mixture. Arrange in pie shell, adding raisins as you layer. Drizzle with lemon juice and dot with butter. This pie can be made with a top and bottom crust, or with a bottom crust and a lattice-work top. Bake at 400° for 25–30 minutes, until golden brown.