

PENNY SAVER NEWS

FAX: 932-5261

December 6, 2007

BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776

e-mail:makeith@ifas.ufl.edu

Pointers for Pies

There's another big family meal coming the end of this month. Nothing says 'Home' as well as a real home made meal, and there are a lot of families where a meal is not complete without one, or several, home made pies. But what do you do if you're desperately trying to cut the calories, save your heart, keep your sugar low, limit the fat, or just trying to eat healthier meals? Or, if you simply don't have enough time, or room in the kitchen and oven for pie making on Christmas or Kwanza morning? Don't despair, read on.

If your limit is time, start now. You can make filling, especially for fruit pies, now. Line your pie plates with a double layer of foil and leave enough on the sides to wrap over and cover the top. Mix the fruit, sugar (or Splenda®), tapioca and spices the way you usually do. Fill the pie shell, and freeze it. When the filling is solid wrap the foil over the top and seal. Remove from the pan, label and store frozen.

Come the holiday, line the pie plate with a store-bought crust. They are actually lower-calorie than home made. Unwrap the frozen filling and set it in the shell. Add a top crust your usual way. Cover the edges with foil. Bake at 425° F for 30 minutes, then remove the foil and bake another 30 minutes or until the crust is golden. The foil allows the filling to cook before the edge gets too brown.

A quick substitute for wrapping foil around the pie is to use a foil pie pan the same size or one size larger than the plate the pie is in. Cut out the center of the foil pan so that the edge is just big enough to cover the edge of the pie.

If a fruit pie tends to boil over and create a smoky mess in the oven set the pie on a cookie sheet. Or stick a few short pieces of drinking straw or even hollow pasta in the

center to let the juices boil up there. Make a decorative design with them, and pull them out before you serve it!

If you're watching the sugar content you have several options. One is to substitute Splenda® for all or part of the sugar. Use the same amount as the recipe specifies. Other low-calorie sweeteners can be used if they will withstand the heat. If the recipe calls for syrup rather than sugar, you can use low or calorie-free pancake syrup for half or more of the syrup. Maple-flavored pancake syrup will add a slightly new flavor twist.

To cut fat calories on a double crust pie, skip the bottom crust. It usually gets soggy anyway, right? Decorate the top crust with dough cut-outs or fruit and no one will notice. If the filling is usually juicy add an extra teaspoon or two of tapioca to thicken fruit filling, or an extra egg white for custard-type fillings.

If you indulge your family with a real old-fashioned custard pie that is baked separately from the crust be sure to cool both parts completely before you slip the filling in. Otherwise the crust will be soggy. Use skim milk and fat free egg substitute for at least some of the ingredients.

To reduce the calories in a nut pie here's a secret ingredient. Use half the quantity of nuts, and replace the rest with GrapeNuts® cereal! They'll stay crunchy, the nuts add flavor, and you'll save half the calories.

For recipes that use ricotta cheese, cottage cheese is a lower-fat alternative. You can drain the cheese in a cheesecloth or coffee filter-lined colander if it's too moist.

Finally, cut the pies into 10 or more slices instead of the usual 8. We're too full after all the rest of the big meal to really need a big slice of pie anyway. Or, make individual mini-pies. There's less temptation to over eat and they take less time in the oven to bake! Here's a recipe that combines 3 favorite holiday flavors and still cuts the calories. Happy Holidays!

Sweet Potato Maple Mini-Pies

