



Freezing Pies and Pie Fillings Saves Time During Holiday Rush



The holidays just aren't the same without Great-grandma Mary's famous fruit pies. But as we all know, the holiday season is hectic and sometimes there just isn't time to make some of our favorite family recipes.

Fortunately, you can make those favorite pies in advance and freeze them. This will save valuable time when you're in a holiday rush, but still get that long-time family favorite pie on the table, said Barbara Brown, Oklahoma State University Extension food specialist.

"You have a couple of options when it comes to freezing fruit pies. First, you can make the pie and freeze it. It's best to freeze an unbaked pie to help ensure it has a fresher fruit flavor," Brown said. "Another option is to freeze the filling and crust separately to prevent fruit juice from penetrating and softening the lower crust during freezing. Freezing the unbaked pie will take up more space in your freezer and ties up that pie pan."

When freezing the filling and crust separately, put the pre-measured fruit filling for one pie in a large freezer bag and squeeze out all of the air. Cooks also can put the bag of cooled filling into a foil-lined pie pan, shaping it to fit the pan. When it's frozen, simply remove the filling and the pan is ready for other uses in the kitchen. When the holidays arrive, simply put the frozen filling in a fresh crust. Allow an extra 20 or so minutes for cooking.

Brown said freezing pie dough also can be a time saver during the holiday season. Roll the dough into circles and freeze on lined cardboard separated with pieces of parchment paper. You also can freeze unbaked dough in pie pans by stacking the pastry-filled pans with two layers of freezer paper between them. Place in a freezer bag to help ensure freshness.

"Go ahead and prick pastry that will be baked unfilled, but don't prick dough that will be filled before baking," she said. "Dough shaped in pans before freezing doesn't need to be thawed before baking."

Some bakers choose to freeze the whole pie first, whether baked or unbaked, then wrap them after they are frozen solid. If you choose this option, do not cut vents in the top crust of an unbaked pie before freezing. This can be done just before baking. A baked pie that has been frozen can be served without reheating. Keep in mind food safety and thaw a baked pie in the refrigerator.

Bake frozen pies in the lower third of the oven at 425 degrees Fahrenheit for 25 minutes, then reduce heat to 350 degrees and move the pie to the center of the oven to finish baking. Be sure to place the pies on a cookie sheet or drip pan to help catch juices that may overflow.



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Thank you!

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To help maintain color in frozen pies, add one-half teaspoon of ascorbic acid or commercial color preserver with the sugar when preparing peach, pear or apple pies. Also, consider adding an extra tablespoon of flour or tapioca or one-half tablespoon of cornstarch or modified food starch to unbaked fruit pies. This will help keep them from bubbling over when baking.

Freezing causes liquids thickened with flour or cornstarch to separate a bit, so fillings thickened with tapioca or modified food starch will maintain their consistency better.

“The holiday season can be extremely hectic, and you don’t want to be stuck in the kitchen cooking the whole time,” Brown said. “Preparing your favorite family fruit pies ahead of schedule will help ensure you get to spend more time with your family.”

Because of pumpkin pie's high fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium content, you may want to come up with other ways to enjoy it. Consider making a Crustless Pumpkin Pie or mini pumpkin pies to cut down on portion sizes. Cut a small piece of pumpkin pie and add non-fat yogurt or low-fat ice cream as a topping. If you yearn for a sweet pumpkin treat, try making pumpkin muffins instead or limiting your intake of fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium for the rest of the day. Try this tasty crust-less pumpkin pie recipe:

Crust-less Pumpkin Pie

- 4 eggs, room temperature
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup dark brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 - 15oz can of pumpkin
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 -12oz can evaporated milk



* Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spray the bottom and sides (up to the rim) of a 9.5-inch regular depth pie pan with nonstick spray.

* Beat the eggs with a mixer. Add the remaining ingredients and beat on low until combined. Place the prepared pie pan on a light colored (not black) baking pan. Pour the mixture into the pie pan.

* Bake for 50 minutes and test for doneness by sticking a knife in the middle of the pie. If the knife comes out clean, it's done (it may still jiggle a little). If not, bake for another 5-10 minutes until the knife comes out clean.

* Allow to cool on a rack for 2 hours before cutting and chilling in the refrigerator.

Nutrition Facts: 8 servings | Calories: 214 kcal | Carbohydrates: 35g | Sugar: 32g | Protein: 6g | Fat: 5g | Cholesterol: 95mg | Sodium: 232mg

12 Ways to Unlock Your Inner Happiness During the Holiday Season

The holidays are just around the corner. Discover some ways you could be sabotaging your own happiness without even realizing it, and take the necessary steps to put your own sanity and mental well-being first, before taking care of others.



1. Don't compare yourself to others

Your life is unique, so don't measure your own worth by comparing yourself to those around you. Measure your own success based on your progress alone, not that of others.

2. Surround yourself with positive people

The saying "misery loves company" is entirely trite, but nonetheless true. That's why you need to choose friends who are optimistic and happy, as you will be surrounded with positive energy.

3. Realize that you don't need others' approval

It's important to follow your own dreams and desires without letting others stand in your way. People pleasing can take a toll on one's health and sanity, so refrain from engaging in it.

4. Take time to truly listen

Active listening helps you soak in the wisdom of others and allows you to quiet your own mind at the same time. Intense listening can help you feel content while helping you gain different perspectives.

5. Nurture social relationships

Positive *personal* social relationships are a key to happiness, so be sure you make time to visit with friends, family and your significant other.

6. Meditate

Research shows that meditation helps you keep your mind focused, calms your nerves and supports inner peace.

7. Eat well

What you eat directly impacts your mood and energy levels in both the short and long term. Learn to eat the right foods both for physical and emotional wellness.

8. Exercise

Exercise boosts levels of health-promoting brain chemicals like serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine, which may help buffer some of the effects of stress and also relieve some symptoms of depression.

9. Live minimally

Clutter has a way of sucking the energy right out of you and replacing it with feelings of chaos. Clutter is an often-unrecognized source of stress that prompts feelings of anxiety and frustration.

10. Be honest

Telling the truth, boosts your mental health and allows others to build trust in you.

11. Establish personal control

Avoid letting other people dictate the way you live. Your self-control is your dignity.

12. Accept what cannot be changed

Everything in your life is not going to be perfect, and that's perfectly all right. Happy people learn to accept injustices and setbacks in their life that they cannot change, and do not become embittered by their experiences.

The above ideas are clearly not set in stone, so consider adding some of your own mental tools you could use at any given moment to combat sadness and stress, and increase the joy in your life. These tools do not cost a dime, but the wisdom contained within each one of them is priceless. These philosophies might seem intuitive and deceptively simple at first glance so be sure not to overlook them, but dig deep within each one of them to help you navigate the secrets of life.

Source: By Emily Waters: Emily earned her Master's degree in industrial psychology with an emphasis in human relations. Presently, she teaches a variety of psychology courses both in public and private universities. <https://psychcentral.com>



Co-Parenting Through the Holidays



The holidays are an exciting time that children and parents look forward to every year. However, for families who have recently experienced divorce, the holidays can be a difficult time for a number of reasons. The most important thing to remember during this time is not to get pulled into resentment and sadness; always think of your children and how you need to do what is best for them. And while it likely won't be easy, it is definitely possible with a few helpful tips on how to make the holidays work:

- 1. Don't make your children decide who to spend the holidays with.**
It should not be left up to your children to decide how time with each parent will be split during the holidays. Putting your children in the middle and letting them decide will only create discomfort for the entire family. You do not want to intensify your children's loyalty conflicts. You and your co-parent should make the decision of how time will be split during the holidays.
- 2. Create a holiday plan prior to the holidays.**
Co-parents should create a holiday schedule prior to the holidays to negotiate how the children will spend time with each parent. Every year may look a little bit different depending on what you and your co-parent agree on. It is important to have a conversation with your children about where they will be and help the transitions remain as smooth as possible.
- 3. Be flexible and be willing to compromise**
When creating a holiday plan, each co-parent will most likely need to compromise. You both won't be able to spend the entire holiday season with your child so it is important to remember that it is in the best interest of your child to spend part of the holidays with both you and your co-parent. It is crucial to calmly negotiate the priorities of you and your co-parent and come to an agreement about the best plan for your children.
- 4. Resist the urge to compete with your co-parent**
Resist the urge to measure your worth as a parent in terms of what you can or cannot provide financially to your children. Don't compete with your co-parent to see who will spend the most or find the best present for your child. Remember that you do not need to buy your children's love.
- 5. Validate your children's emotions**
Your children will feel a range of emotions as they experience their first holiday season in two different homes. Let them know that it is okay to feel sadness or other negative emotions and be there for them. Don't make your children feel guilty about spending time with your co-parent. If they miss your co-parent, allow them to call your co-parent during the holidays.
- 6. Start New Traditions**
A divorce or separation doesn't have to mean that all fun holiday traditions should be over. Instead, come up with new ones for your family to enjoy. Allow your children to help create new traditions with each parent that will help adjust to the new family holiday season. When appropriate, old family traditions may also be continued. Think ahead, when your children grow up, what memories of the holidays do you want them to have to pass on to their own children?

If you and your co-parent are able to keep your children as the priority and work to plan everything well in advance, it is entirely possible to begin new traditions with your children and avoid the normal stress of the holiday season.

Source: <https://education.okstate.edu/outreach/fcs/coparenting/index.html>



SHOUT OUT FROM SHARI

2020 has brought many challenges and opportunities! Communication has been critical in the way that so many people have stayed connected to one another.

I am SO PROUD of our Tulsa County members and all our Groups! OHCE-TC has continued to help educate their families and serve their communities throughout this Pandemic year and we will continue to do so in 2021! Just think, a year ago, we would never have thought that our members would embrace technology, and now Zoom and Facebook meetings have become a new "Normal" for many organizations, ours included, to communicate and stay connected.

This past year we have had to "Think Outside the Box" and we have been very successful in achieving many of our goals! First, I would like to thank Michelle Bonicelli and Roxanne Mahoney for all that they do to serve our OHCE groups of Tulsa County! A BIG SHOUT OUT to our Membership Committee! Thank You to all our members who participated in our Fall Fun & Fellowship. I enjoyed being able to see you and to watch you create your beautiful paper mache pumpkins! A HUGE SHOUT OUT to Promotional Sales! Thank you to the ladies who came and worked incredibly hard to make the rummage yard sale such a huge success!! This year OHCE-TC has given more money to the TC Scholarship Fund, the 4-H Gate Signs, the Ambassadors, and the Norma Brumbaugh Scholarship fund than EVER before! Thank you for giving to all these worthy projects. A Shout Out to Family Issues. On December 2nd we are still able to help the Tulsa County Emergency Shelter with our monetary and donated items in our Parking Lot Event! (from noon to 2:30)

For 2021 I want us to focus on bringing in New Members! Invite a friend to join! Who do you know that would enjoy helping their families and communities? We must continue to move forward and continue to plant the seeds of OHCE! I can't wait for 2021 to see how many more great things OHCE-TC can achieve!



Nuts about OHCE! *Shari*

Please remember: While attending an OHCE event: masks and social distancing are required.



WHAT'S HAPPENING

December:

2: Tulsa County Emergency Shelter Donation Drive bring monetary and donated items to the Extension Parking Lot Event from Noon to 2:30. Wear your Christmas Sweater! (Mask and social distancing required.)

7: (CANCELLED) ~~Membership: Paint & Sack Lunch~~

14: Chat and Create 10:00 am Auditorium

24-25: Christmas – Extension Office Closed.

January:

1: New Year's Day – Extension Office Closed

11: Chat and Create 10:00 am Auditorium

15: RSVP to Dolores for January Business Meeting*

18: Martin Luther King Jr Day – Ext. Office Closed

19: Leader Lesson training, Owasso Assembly of God 10:00*

20: Business Meeting, 9:00 Board, 10:00 Members*

25: Chat and Create 10:00 am Auditorium

*(pending pandemic status)

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT:

The New Year 2021 is a good year to learn about Resource Management in four (4) areas:

1. Home
2. Food
3. Utilities
4. Transportation

To begin the New Year, use a journal to become familiar with the time and expenses you give to each one on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.

A "Thought Question" will be presented in each monthly newsletter to encourage discussion at your monthly Group meeting. It would also be of interest to name one specific goal pertaining to that question that would benefit all the members of your group during the month.

"Thought Question" for January

How does Resource Management contribute to the overall health, happiness and well-being of the family?

~Dolores Williams, Resource Management Chairperson



Oklahoma Home and Community Education (OHCE), consists of eight groups that meet in and around Tulsa. The groups meet once a month, at various times. The groups meet in at libraries, churches or community centers. To start or join a group in your neighborhood or community, call the Tulsa County OSU Extension Office at 918-746-3706.



OHCE UPDATES



CHAT AND CREATE: We continue to meet on the second and fourth Monday's of each month and we hope you will join us as we work on various projects that include:

- *Quilts of Valor blocks
- *Neck coolers for MS walkers and golfers and gardeners
- *Christmas napkins
- *Pillows
- *Counted Cross stitch, and anything you might like to bring and share with us.

We have a great time visiting, sharing ideas and getting acquainted with those in other groups.

December date: 12-14-20 January dates: 01-11-21 & 01-25-21

~ Pat Thomas



The Healthy Living THRIVE focus this month....

Hello OHCE-TC. Will this COVID19 never end? At the first of the year I chose the word "THRIVE" for the word of the year. Now look at us! We have been able to "THRIVE" in spite of the pandemic. Here is a couple of Healthy Living Links to see us through to the New Year. Blessings and stay safe.

<https://blog.ochsner.org/articles/how-to-safely-host-holiday-gatherings-during-covid-19>

<https://fitnessandwellnessnews.com/healthy-new-year/>

~Charline Romine, Healthy Living Committee Chairman



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