VANILLAGOODS BAKING ACADEMY · PIES & TARTS

Course workbook

Custard & Cream Pies

Pumpkin, pecan, cream and meringue



Intermediate · 5 video lessons · 61 minutes of video · Notes, quizzes and a practice log

By the end you'll be able to

- Bake custard pies that set cleanly
- Cook a cream pie filling to the right thickness
- Top with meringue that doesn't weep

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Lesson videos by Marion Grasby, Tasting History with Max Miller, Oh Yum with Anna Olson, Preppy Kitchen and Chef Buck, watched on YouTube from the course page.

This workbook belongs to _____

START HERE

How to use this workbook

This workbook goes with the free video course **Custard & Cream Pies** on vanillagoods.com. Watch each lesson there, then use these pages to keep what you learned and to track what you have practised.

1

Watch

Open the lesson page and watch the creator's video. Jot quick notes on the lined space as you go.

2

Read and tick

Read the VanillaGoods notes, then tick each key point once you can explain it in your own words.

3

Check and practise

Answer the three questions, compare with the answer key on page 13, then log your bake.

Your lesson plan

	LESSON	VIDEO	WATCHED	QUIZ	PRACTISED
1	**Pumpkin pie** Video by Marion Grasby	18 min	☐	☐	☐
2	**Pecan pie** Video by Tasting History with Max Miller	14 min	☐	☐	☐
3	**Chocolate cream pie** Video by Oh Yum with Anna Olson	5 min	☐	☐	☐
4	**Banana cream pie** Video by Preppy Kitchen	11 min	☐	☐	☐
5	**Lemon meringue pie** Video by Chef Buck	13 min	☐	☐	☐

Tools you'll see

9-inch pie dish · Pie crust shield · Pie weights · Balloon whisk · Instant-read thermometer · Half-sheet pan · Saucepan · Fine-mesh strainer · Hand mixer · Kitchen torch · Fine zester

Any brand works. The lessons show what each tool is for.

Keep track online too

On each lesson page, "Mark complete" saves your progress in your browser, with no account. Finish every lesson and the course page lets you print a free certificate of completion.

Pumpkin pie

Video by **Marion Grasby**: *"No CRACKS, ultra SMOOTH...the creamy pumpkin pie recipe that WORKS every time | Marion's Kitchen"*

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/custard-and-cream-pies-1-pumpkin-pie

A smooth pumpkin pie with no cracks and a crisp crust: par-bake the shell, pull the pie while the center still jiggles, and cool it slowly.

Key points

- [ ] Pumpkin pie is a custard; eggs set the filling
- [ ] Par-bake the crust so the bottom stays crisp
- [ ] Pull it when the center still jiggles like gelatin

Why pumpkin pie cracks

The filling is a custard of pumpkin, eggs, sugar and dairy. Eggs set gently, and if they are baked too long they tighten, squeeze out liquid and crack. Cracks mean the pie stayed in the oven a few minutes too long.

Step by step

- Par-bake the crust with pie weights until it is set and lightly golden
- Whisk the filling until smooth, using pumpkin purée, not canned pie filling
- Pour the filling into the warm crust
- Bake until the edges are set and slightly puffed and the center 2–3 inches still jiggles
- Cool on a rack for about 2 hours; the center finishes setting as it cools

Watch for

Cover the crust edge with a pie shield or a ring of foil once it is golden. Do not test with a knife in the center; the cut often becomes a crack. Pumpkin pie is made with eggs and milk, so refrigerate it within 2 hours of cooling and keep it chilled.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: 9-inch pie dish | Pie crust shield | Pie weights | Balloon whisk

NOTES WHILE YOU WATCH

✓ Check yourself

Three quick questions from this lesson. Mark your answers, then compare with the answer key on page 13.

1 What causes cracks in pumpkin pie?

- (A) Too much pumpkin
- (B) Overbaking, which tightens the eggs
- (C) A crust that is too thick

2 When should the pie come out of the oven?

- (A) When the center is firm and dry
- (B) When the top is dark brown
- (C) When the edges are set and the center still jiggles

3 How should a cooled pumpkin pie be stored?

- (A) In the fridge
- (B) On the counter for several days
- (C) In a warm oven

Practice log

Practice is where the lesson sticks. Note what you made and what you would do differently.

WHAT I MADE	DATE AND HOW IT WENT
	☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

WHAT WENT WELL

WHAT I'D CHANGE NEXT TIME

Pecan pie

Video by **Tasting History with Max Miller**: *"The History of Pecan Pie"*

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/custard-and-cream-pies-2-pecan-pie

A pecan pie that slices cleanly: toasted nuts, a par-baked crust, the right doneness test and enough time to cool.

Key points

- [ ] Toast the pecans first for deeper flavor
- [ ] Bake until the edges are set and the center jiggles slightly
- [ ] Cool at least 3–4 hours so the filling sets

What sets the filling

Under the pecans is a sweet custard of eggs, sugar, syrup and butter. The eggs thicken it as it bakes, and it keeps firming as it cools. A pie that is runny when sliced was either underbaked or cut while still warm.

Step by step

- Toast the pecans at 350°F (175°C) for 8–10 minutes, until fragrant
- Par-bake the crust so the bottom does not turn soggy
- Whisk the eggs, sugar, syrup, melted butter, vanilla and salt and stir in the nuts
- Bake on a lower rack at 350°F (175°C) for 50–60 minutes
- The pie is done when the edges are puffed and set and the center jiggles slightly, about 200°F (93°C) inside

Watch for

Set the pie on a baking sheet to catch drips and to help the bottom crust cook. Shield the crust edge if it browns early. Give the pie 3–4 hours at room temperature before slicing. Because the filling is made with eggs, store the cooled pie in the fridge.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: 9-inch pie dish · Pie crust shield · Instant-read thermometer · Half-sheet pan

NOTES WHILE YOU WATCH

✓ Check yourself

Three quick questions from this lesson. Mark your answers, then compare with the answer key on page 13.

1 Why toast the pecans before baking the pie?

- (A) For deeper flavor
- (B) To make them softer
- (C) To remove their skins

2 Why is a pecan pie runny when sliced?

- (A) It had too many nuts
- (B) The crust was too thin
- (C) It was underbaked or cut while still warm

3 How long should the pie cool before slicing?

- (A) 15 minutes
- (B) At least 3–4 hours
- (C) It can be sliced hot

Practice log

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WHAT I MADE	DATE AND HOW IT WENT
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WHAT WENT WELL

WHAT I'D CHANGE NEXT TIME

Chocolate cream pie

Video by **Oh Yum with Anna Olson**: *"Professional Baker Teaches You How To Make CHOCOLATE CREAM PIE!"*
vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/custard-and-cream-pies-3-chocolate-cream-pie

A fully baked crust, a stovetop chocolate custard that is boiled so it holds, and a long chill before the whipped cream goes on.

Key points

- [ ] Bake the crust fully; the filling is not baked
- [ ] Boil the custard for a full minute so it sets firmly
- [ ] Press plastic wrap on the surface and chill 4–6 hours

How a cream pie works

A cream pie is a blind-baked crust filled with a custard cooked on the stove and set in the fridge. The custard is thickened with cornstarch and egg yolks, then enriched with chocolate and butter. Whipped cream goes on just before serving.

Step by step

- Whisk the sugar, cornstarch, salt and yolks, then whisk in the milk
- Cook over medium heat, whisking all the time, until it thickens and bubbles
- Keep it at a boil for a full minute, still whisking
- Off the heat, stir in chopped chocolate, butter and vanilla, then strain
- Pour into the cooled crust, press plastic wrap onto the surface and chill

Watch for

The full minute of boiling matters: cornstarch needs it to thicken completely, and it stops an enzyme in the yolks that would thin the custard later. Whisk into the corners of the pan so nothing scorches. Keep the finished pie refrigerated.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: Saucepan · Balloon whisk · Fine-mesh strainer · 9-inch pie dish

NOTES WHILE YOU WATCH

✓ Check yourself

Three quick questions from this lesson. Mark your answers, then compare with the answer key on page 13.

1 Why must the custard boil for a full minute?

- (A) To melt the chocolate
- (B) To evaporate the milk
- (C) So the cornstarch thickens fully and the custard does not thin later

2 How is the crust prepared for a cream pie?

- (A) It is fully baked before filling
- (B) It is left raw
- (C) It is baked with the filling

3 How do you stop a skin forming on the custard?

- (A) Stir it every hour
- (B) Press plastic wrap directly onto the surface
- (C) Leave it uncovered

Practice log

Practice is where the lesson sticks. Note what you made and what you would do differently.

WHAT I MADE	DATE AND HOW IT WENT
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WHAT WENT WELL

WHAT I'D CHANGE NEXT TIME

Banana cream pie

Video by **Preppy Kitchen**: *"The BEST Banana Cream Pie Recipe"*

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/custard-and-cream-pies-4-banana-cream-pie

Banana cream pie in layers: a baked crust, ripe bananas sealed under vanilla pastry cream, and whipped cream on top.

Key points

- [ ] Use ripe but firm bananas
- [ ] Cover the bananas completely with custard so they do not brown
- [ ] Chill at least 4 hours before topping and slicing

Building the layers

The pie has four parts: a fully baked crust, sliced bananas, vanilla pastry cream and whipped cream. The order matters. A thin layer of custard goes in first to protect the crust, then the bananas, then the rest of the custard to seal them from the air.

Step by step

- Bake the crust fully and let it cool
- Cook the vanilla pastry cream, boiling it for a full minute, and let it cool until just warm
- Spread a thin layer of custard in the crust
- Add bananas in an even layer and cover them completely with the remaining custard
- Press wrap on the surface, chill 4 hours, then top with whipped cream

VanillaGoods tip

Bananas are mild, so vanilla is the main flavor in the custard. Steep a split vanilla bean in the warm milk for 15–30 minutes before cooking. Choose bananas that are yellow with a few specks; green ones taste starchy and very ripe ones turn mushy. The pie is best within a day or two and must stay in the fridge.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON 9-inch pie dish · Saucepan · Balloon whisk · Hand mixer

NOTES WHILE YOU WATCH

✓ Check yourself

Three quick questions from this lesson. Mark your answers, then compare with the answer key on page 13.

1 How do you keep the bananas from browning?

- (A) Soak them in water
- (B) Cover them completely with custard
- (C) Freeze them first

2 Which bananas are best for the pie?

- (A) Yellow with a few specks, ripe but firm
- (B) Green
- (C) Black and very soft

3 What goes into the crust first?

- (A) Whipped cream
- (B) All of the bananas
- (C) A thin layer of custard

Practice log

Practice is where the lesson sticks. Note what you made and what you would do differently.

WHAT I MADE	DATE AND HOW IT WENT
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WHAT WENT WELL

WHAT I'D CHANGE NEXT TIME

Lemon meringue pie

Video by **Chef Buck**: *"Best Lemon Meringue Pie Recipe ...seriously"*

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/custard-and-cream-pies-5-lemon-meringue-pie

Lemon meringue pie without the puddle: hot filling, a meringue sealed to the crust and sugar that is fully dissolved.

Key points

- [ ] Spread the meringue over hot filling
- [ ] Seal the meringue to the crust all the way around
- [ ] Add sugar slowly so it dissolves completely

Why meringue weeps

A watery layer under the meringue forms when the bottom of the meringue never cooks. Spreading it on hot filling cooks it from below. Beads of syrup on top are the opposite problem: the meringue was baked too long or too hot.

Step by step

- Blind-bake the crust fully
- Cook the lemon filling with cornstarch until it boils and thickens, and keep it hot
- Whip the whites, adding the sugar a spoonful at a time, until stiff and glossy
- Rub a little between your fingers; if it feels gritty, keep whipping
- Pile the meringue onto the hot filling and spread it to touch the crust all around

Baking and serving

Bake at 325–350°F (165–175°C) for 15–20 minutes, until the peaks are golden. Sealing the meringue to the crust keeps it from shrinking back as it cools. Cool at room temperature for an hour, then chill. A meringue made by the Swiss or Italian method holds up better, and the pie is at its best the day it is made.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: 9-inch pie dish · Hand mixer · Kitchen torch · Fine zester

NOTES WHILE YOU WATCH

✓ Check yourself

Three quick questions from this lesson. Mark your answers, then compare with the answer key on page 13.

1 Why spread meringue on hot filling?

- (A) So the bottom of the meringue cooks and does not weep
- (B) To melt the sugar
- (C) To make the crust crisp

2 Why seal the meringue to the crust?

- (A) To add height
- (B) To keep the filling warm
- (C) So it does not shrink back from the edge

3 What do beads of syrup on the meringue mean?

- (A) It was not whipped enough
- (B) It was baked too long or too hot
- (C) The lemons were too sour

Practice log

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WHAT I MADE	DATE AND HOW IT WENT
	☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

WHAT WENT WELL

WHAT I'D CHANGE NEXT TIME

ANSWER KEY

Check your answers

One correct answer per question. If you missed one, the note explains why, and the lesson page has the full notes and the video.

1. Pumpkin pie

1 **B** The filling is a custard; baked too long, the eggs tighten and the surface splits.
2 **C** The center finishes setting from the heat held in the pie as it cools.
3 **A** Pies made with eggs and milk should be refrigerated within 2 hours of cooling.

2. Pecan pie

1 **A** Toasting brings out the oils and gives the nuts a fuller, roasted flavor.
2 **C** The egg custard firms as it bakes and keeps setting as it cools, so it needs both a full bake and a long cool.
3 **B** The filling finishes setting at room temperature over several hours.

3. Chocolate cream pie

1 **C** Boiling activates the starch and stops a yolk enzyme that would otherwise break the custard down.
2 **A** The filling is not baked, so the crust has to be completely baked and cooled first.
3 **B** Wrap pressed against the surface keeps air off, so no skin forms.

4. Banana cream pie

1 **B** Bananas brown in air; sealed under the custard, they stay pale.
2 **A** Ripe but firm bananas have full flavor and still hold their shape.
3 **C** A thin layer of custard protects the crust from the moisture in the bananas.

5. Lemon meringue pie

1 **A** Hot filling cooks the meringue from below, which prevents a watery layer.
2 **C** Meringue anchored to the crust stays in place as it cools.
3 **B** Overbaking squeezes sugar syrup out of the meringue as small droplets.

WHEN YOU'VE FINISHED

Three things to do next

1

Mark each lesson complete

The "Mark complete" button on every lesson page saves your progress in your browser. No account, nothing to sign up for.

2

Print your certificate

Once all 5 lessons are marked complete, the course page prints a free certificate of completion with your name on it. It records what you finished; it is not an accredited qualification.

3

Bake it

Practice with VanillaGoods recipes that use what this course teaches.

vanillagoods.com/pages/recipes?q=pumpkin%20pie

NEXT ON THE LEARNING PATH

Homemade Doughnuts

Intermediate · Brioche-style doughs, frying, glazes

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-course/homemade-doughnuts

Free guide for this course: “Custard pie doneness guide”, The jiggle test, temperatures and cooling times for every custard pie. Get it from the course page.

Baking with real vanilla? VanillaGoods keeps Madagascar, Uganda and Tahiti vanilla in stock, along with coffee and tea, at vanillagoods.com.

✧ Key points from every lesson

1. Pumpkin pie

- Pumpkin pie is a custard; eggs set the filling
- Par-bake the crust so the bottom stays crisp
- Pull it when the center still jiggles like gelatin

2. Pecan pie

- Toast the pecans first for deeper flavor
- Bake until the edges are set and the center jiggles slightly
- Cool at least 3–4 hours so the filling sets

3. Chocolate cream pie

- Bake the crust fully; the filling is not baked
- Boil the custard for a full minute so it sets firmly
- Press plastic wrap on the surface and chill 4–6 hours

4. Banana cream pie

- Use ripe but firm bananas
- Cover the bananas completely with custard so they do not brown
- Chill at least 4 hours before topping and slicing

5. Lemon meringue pie

- Spread the meringue over hot filling
- Seal the meringue to the crust all the way around
- Add sugar slowly so it dissolves completely

The lesson videos are by independent creators (Marion Grasby, Tasting History with Max Miller, Oh Yum with Anna Olson, Preppy Kitchen and Chef Buck) and play in YouTube's own player on the lesson pages; this workbook links to them and copies nothing. Notes, key points, questions and this workbook are written by VanillaGoods for home bakers.

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