VANILLAGOODS BAKING ACADEMY · PIES & TARTS

Course workbook

Pie & Tart Crust Masterclass

Flaky crusts, fillings, blind baking



Intermediate · 5 video lessons · 51 minutes of video · Notes, quizzes and a practice log

By the end you'll be able to

- Mix and roll a flaky all-butter crust
- Blind bake without shrinking
- Set fruit and custard fillings

Inside

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Lesson videos by Inspired Taste, Erin Jeanne McDowell, Pastry Living with Aya, Chef Rachida and Parnell The Chef, watched on YouTube from the course page.

This workbook belongs to _____

Free course: **vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-course/flaky-pie-crust**

November 2026

START HERE

How to use this workbook

This workbook goes with the free video course **Pie & Tart Crust Masterclass** 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	**All-butter pie dough** Video by Inspired Taste	7 min	☐	☐	☐
2	**Rolling and crimping** Video by Erin Jeanne McDowell	6 min	☐	☐	☐
3	**Blind baking** Video by Pastry Living with Aya	17 min	☐	☐	☐
4	**Sweet tart shell (pâte sucrée)** Video by Chef Rachida	7 min	☐	☐	☐
5	**Fruit pie fillings that set** Video by Parnell The Chef	14 min	☐	☐	☐

Tools you'll see

Food processor · Pastry blender · 9-inch pie dish · Kitchen scale · Rolling pin · Bench scraper · Pastry brush · Pie weights · Parchment paper · Tart pan with a removable bottom · Half-sheet pan · Cooling rack

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.

All-butter pie dough

Video by **Inspired Taste**: *"Easy All Butter Flaky Pie Crust Recipe - How to Make Homemade Pie Crust"*

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/flaky-pie-crust-1-all-butter-pie-dough

Make a flaky, all-butter pie crust by hand or in a food processor, and learn why cold butter pieces create the layers.

Key points

- [ ] Keep the butter cold and in visible pieces
- [ ] Add ice water a little at a time
- [ ] Chill the dough at least an hour before rolling

Where flakes come from

Pieces of cold butter flatten into sheets as you roll. In the oven their water turns to steam and pushes the dough apart into flaky layers. Warm butter blends in and gives a mealy, crumbly crust instead.

Step by step

- Pulse or cut cold, cubed butter into the flour and salt until the pieces range from peas to small almonds
- Sprinkle in ice water a tablespoon at a time, just until the dough holds when squeezed
- Press into a disc, wrap and chill at least 1 hour, or up to 2 days
- Freeze extra discs for up to 3 months

Watch for

Don't overwork the dough once the water goes in; that develops gluten and makes the crust tough and prone to shrinking.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: Food processor · Pastry blender · 9-inch pie dish · Kitchen scale

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 Where do the flakes in an all-butter crust come from?

- (A) Cold butter pieces that flatten into sheets and steam apart in the oven
- (B) Sugar caramelizing between the layers
- (C) Extra kneading

2 How big should the butter pieces be after cutting them into the flour?

- (A) Completely blended, like sand
- (B) From peas to small almonds
- (C) Whole cubes

3 Why not keep working the dough once the water goes in?

- (A) The butter gets too cold
- (B) The water evaporates
- (C) It develops gluten, making the crust tough and prone to shrinking

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

Rolling and crimping

Video by **Erin Jeanne McDowell**: *"The ABSOLUTE BEST Way to Roll and Prep Your Pie Dough | Happy Baking with Erin Jeanne McDowell"*

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/flaky-pie-crust-2-rolling-and-crimping

Roll pie dough evenly, line the pan without stretching, and prepare clean edges for single- and double-crust pies.

Key points

- [ ] Roll from the center out, turning the dough often
- [ ] Ease the dough into the pan; never stretch it
- [ ] Chill the lined pan before baking

Rolling

- Let chilled dough sit 5–10 minutes if it cracks when you start
- Roll from the center outward, giving the dough a quarter turn every few rolls
- Lightly flour the surface and pin as needed
- Roll to about 1/8 inch thick and 12 inches across for a 9-inch pan

Lining and edges

- Roll the dough loosely onto the pin and unroll it over the pan
- Lift the edges and let the dough settle into the corners
- Trim to about a 1-inch overhang, fold it under and crimp
- For double-crust pies, trim the bottom crust flush and seal the top crust over it

Watch for

Chill the lined pan 30 minutes before filling or baking. Stretched or warm dough shrinks in the oven.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: Rolling pin · 9-inch pie dish · Bench scraper · Pastry brush

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 is the right way to fit dough into the pan?

- (A) Stretch it over the rim so it fits tightly
- (B) Lift the edges and let it settle into the corners
- (C) Press it in with your knuckles from the center

2 How wide should the dough be rolled for a 9-inch pan?

- (A) About 9 inches
- (B) About 16 inches
- (C) About 12 inches

3 Why chill the lined pan for 30 minutes before baking?

- (A) So the dough does not shrink in the oven
- (B) So the crust browns darker
- (C) So the filling sets faster

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

Blind baking

Video by **Pastry Living with Aya**: *"How To Make Perfect Tart Crust (No Blind Baking Needed!) *UPDATED*"*
vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/flaky-pie-crust-3-blind-baking

Bake crusts ahead for custard and cream pies, and see a tart-crust method that skips pie weights by keeping the shell very cold.

Key points

- [ ] Blind bake for fillings that bake briefly or not at all
- [ ] Chill or freeze the shell first so it holds its shape
- [ ] Pie weights stop the bottom from puffing and the sides from slumping

When to blind bake

Cream pies, chilled pies and many custard pies need a crust that's partly or fully baked before the filling goes in; otherwise the bottom stays pale and soggy.

Classic blind baking

- Dock the bottom with a fork and freeze the lined pan 30 minutes
- Line with parchment and fill to the top with pie weights or dried beans
- Bake at 375–400°F about 20 minutes, until the edges are set
- Remove the weights and bake 5–15 minutes more, partly or until fully golden
- Brush with beaten egg white in the last minutes to seal it against wet fillings

In this video

The tart crust shown uses a sweet, almond-flour dough fitted into the pan, chilled well and docked, so it can bake without weights. It's a great option for tart shells; for flaky pie dough, weights are still the safest choice.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: Pie weights · Parchment paper · Tart pan with a removable bottom · 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 Which pie needs a blind-baked crust?

- (A) A double-crust apple pie
- (B) A cream pie with a filling that is not baked
- (C) A pie that bakes for over an hour

2 What do pie weights do during blind baking?

- (A) Keep the crust warm
- (B) Add flavor
- (C) Stop the bottom puffing and the sides slumping

3 Why brush the hot shell with beaten egg white in the last minutes?

- (A) To seal it against wet fillings
- (B) To make it rise
- (C) To add sweetness

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

Sweet tart shell (pâte sucrée)

Video by **Chef Rachida**: *"Pâte Sucrée (Sweet Tart Dough) Recipe"*

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/flaky-pie-crust-4-sweet-tart-shell-pate-sucree

Make pâte sucrée, the crisp, cookie-like French sweet tart dough, and line a tart pan neatly.

Key points

- [ ] Pâte sucrée is creamed, not cut, so it's tender and sandy
- [ ] Roll it cold between parchment
- [ ] Bake until evenly golden for a crisp shell

How it differs

Unlike flaky pie dough, pâte sucrée is made by creaming butter with powdered sugar, then adding egg and flour. The result is sweet, tender and crisp, like shortbread, and it doesn't puff.

Step by step

- Mix just until the dough comes together; overmixing makes it tough
- Flatten into a disc and chill at least an hour
- Roll between parchment to about 1/8 inch thick
- Fit into the tart pan, pressing into the fluted sides, and trim the top
- Chill again, then bake at about 325–350°F until golden

VanillaGoods tip

A little vanilla bean or extract in the dough makes the shell taste as good as the filling, especially for fruit tarts and pastry-cream tarts.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: Tart pan with a removable bottom · Rolling pin · Parchment paper · Pie weights

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 does pâte sucrée differ from flaky pie dough?

- (A) It uses more water
- (B) It is creamed like a cookie dough, so it is tender and sandy rather than flaky
- (C) It is kneaded until elastic

2 How thick is the dough rolled for a tart shell?

- (A) About 1/2 inch, on a floured board
- (B) As thin as paper
- (C) About 1/8 inch, between parchment

3 What temperature does a pâte sucrée shell bake at?

- (A) About 325 to 350°F
- (B) About 250°F
- (C) About 450°F

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

Fruit pie fillings that set

Video by **Parnell The Chef**: *"Blackberry Pie with Frozen Berries"*

vanillagoods.com/pages/baking-lesson/flaky-pie-crust-5-fruit-pie-fillings-that-set

Make fruit pie fillings, including frozen berry pies, that slice cleanly instead of running across the plate.

Key points

- [ ] A starch thickener has to boil to work
- [ ] Bake until the filling bubbles thickly in the center
- [ ] Cool for several hours before slicing

Why fillings run

Fruit releases a lot of juice as it bakes. Starches such as cornstarch, tapioca or flour thicken that juice, but only once it actually boils. Pulling a pie when only the edges bubble leaves a soupy center.

Step by step

- Toss fruit with sugar, thickener, lemon juice and a pinch of salt
- Use frozen fruit straight from the freezer and add a little extra thickener
- Bake on a sheet pan to catch drips
- Bake until the juices bubble slowly and thickly in the center vents, often 60–75 minutes
- Cool at least 3–4 hours so the filling sets

Watch for

If the crust browns before the filling bubbles, tent it with foil and keep baking.

TOOLS IN THIS LESSON: 9-inch pie dish · Half-sheet pan · Cooling rack · Pastry brush

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 does a fruit filling run even though it had cornstarch in it?

- (A) Too much sugar was used
- (B) The starch only thickens once the juices actually boil
- (C) The fruit was too ripe

2 When is a fruit pie done baking?

- (A) When the crust is golden
- (B) After exactly 45 minutes
- (C) When the juices bubble slowly and thickly through the center vents

3 How long should a fruit pie cool before slicing?

- (A) At least 3 to 4 hours
- (B) 10 minutes
- (C) About an hour

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. All-butter pie dough

1 **A** Pieces of cold butter flatten into sheets as you roll; in the oven their water turns to steam and pushes the dough apart into flaky layers.

2 **B** Cut or pulse the cold butter until the pieces range from peas to small almonds; visible pieces are what make the flakes.

3 **C** Overworking after the water goes in develops gluten, which makes the crust tough and likely to shrink in the pan.

2. Rolling and crimping

1 **B** Ease the dough in by lifting the edges and letting it settle; stretched dough shrinks back in the oven.

2 **C** Roll to about 1/8 inch thick and 12 inches across for a 9-inch pan, leaving enough for a 1-inch overhang.

3 **A** Chilling the lined pan relaxes the dough and firms the butter; warm or stretched dough shrinks in the oven.

3. Blind baking

1 **B** Cream pies, chilled pies and many custard pies need a crust baked before the filling goes in; otherwise the bottom stays pale and soggy.

2 **C** Weights (or dried beans) on parchment hold the crust in shape so the bottom does not puff and the sides do not slump.

3 **A** A thin coat of egg white seals the crust so wet fillings do not soak into it.

4. Sweet tart shell (pâte sucrée)

1 **B** Pâte sucrée is made by creaming butter with powdered sugar, then adding egg and flour; it bakes crisp and tender like shortbread and does not puff.

2 **C** Roll the chilled dough between parchment to about 1/8 inch, then press it into the fluted sides and trim the top.

3 **A** After a second chill, bake at about 325 to 350°F until evenly golden for a crisp shell.

5. Fruit pie fillings that set

1 **B** Starch thickeners like cornstarch, tapioca or flour only set once the filling boils, so a pie pulled when only the edges bubble stays soupy.

2 **C** Bake, often 60 to 75 minutes, until the juices bubble thickly in the center vents; tent the crust with foil if it browns first.

3 **A** The filling keeps setting as it cools; give it at least 3 to 4 hours for clean slices.

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=vanilla%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: “Pie crust ratios card”, Flour, fat and water ratios for flaky, mealy and sweet crusts. 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. All-butter pie dough

- Keep the butter cold and in visible pieces
- Add ice water a little at a time
- Chill the dough at least an hour before rolling

2. Rolling and crimping

- Roll from the center out, turning the dough often
- Ease the dough into the pan; never stretch it
- Chill the lined pan before baking

3. Blind baking

- Blind bake for fillings that bake briefly or not at all
- Chill or freeze the shell first so it holds its shape
- Pie weights stop the bottom from puffing and the sides from slumping

4. Sweet tart shell (pâte sucrée)

- Pâte sucrée is creamed, not cut, so it's tender and sandy
- Roll it cold between parchment
- Bake until evenly golden for a crisp shell

5. Fruit pie fillings that set

- A starch thickener has to boil to work
- Bake until the filling bubbles thickly in the center
- Cool for several hours before slicing

The lesson videos are by independent creators (Inspired Taste, Erin Jeanne McDowell, Pastry Living with Aya, Chef Rachida and Parnell The Chef) 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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