

“them that works hard eats hearty!” pt. 2

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The Pennsylvania Dutch are known for their hard-working lifestyle where almost everything is done by hand. Imagine doing the family laundry in a tub? And can you appreciate the work that goes into plowing fields while walking behind a team of horses?

The bright side is that once you've expended all that energy, you can eat pretty much anything you want! This is one of the reasons the Amish and Mennonites are famous for their amazing desserts and breads. Here are a few of my favorites.

shoo-fly pie

While working at a commercial blood bank in West Philadelphia, I would go on a weekly “blood delivery run” to a Pottstown hospital that sat right on the edge of Amish country. Roadside stands were a welcome site, and I always stopped to buy a shoo-fly pie. If you like molasses, you'll love this, but I warn you, it is an unconventional way to make a pie!

Ingredients

9-inch unbaked pie shell (easy crust recipe follows)

½ tsp baking soda

¾ cup boiling water

¾ cup molasses

½ cup brown sugar

1½ cups flour

¼ cup butter, margarine, or lard, softened

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375°. In a medium bowl, dissolve soda in boiling water, then stir in molasses.
2. In another bowl, combine sugar, flour and butter, and use your fingers to rub together to make crumbs.
3. Place a third of the crumbs into the pie shell and gently ladle all the molasses mixture over it.
4. Place remaining crumbs on top to cover evenly. Do not stir. Bake 35 minutes or until nicely browned.

pat-a-pan pie crust

This amazing crust needs NO mixing bowls and rolling pins! You mix and pat it in your pie pan. So easy and so Amish! If dough is too “short” and crumbly, add more milk a teaspoon or two at a time till dough holds together well.

Ingredients

1½ cups of flour

1½ tsp sugar
½ tsp salt
½ cup vegetable oil
3 Tbs cold milk or more if needed

Directions

1. Place the flour, sugar, and salt in the pie pan and mix with fingertips until evenly blended.
2. In a measuring cup combine the oil and milk and beat until creamy.
3. Pour all at once over the flour mixture. Mix with a fork until the flour mixture is completely moistened.
4. Pat the dough with your fingers, first at the sides of the plate and then across the bottom.
5. Flute the edges. Shell is now ready to be filled.
6. If you are preparing a shell to fill later or your recipe requires a prebaked crust, preheat oven to 425°.
7. Prick the surface of the pastry with a fork and bake 15 minutes. Use pie weights or check often and prick more if needed.

amish coffee cake

This is quick, delicious, and needs no eggs!

Ingredients

1¼ cup sugar
1 cup vegetable oil 1 cup sour milk, buttermilk, or sour cream
1 tsp vanilla
2 cups flour
1 tsp baking soda
½ tsp baking powder
½ tsp salt

For the Topping:

½ cup brown sugar mixed with 1 Tbs cinnamon

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Mix the sugar, oil, milk, and vanilla in a large bowl. Then add flour, baking soda, baking powder and salt.
2. Pour into a greased 13x9 inch pan. Sprinkle topping on top of batter.
3. Bake 45-55 minutes till edges are golden brown and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

amish half-a-pound cake

This starts out in a cold oven—no preheating needed—and so nice for warm weather baking. You just need to remember to set the eggs and milk out on the counter for a couple of hours to warm them up a tad.

Ingredients

2 cups flour
1½ cups sugar
4 eggs (room temperature)
2 tsp vanilla
2 tsp baking powder
½ tsp salt
1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
½ cup milk (room temperature)
½ tsp mace or nutmeg

Directions

1. In a mixing bowl, combine all ingredients. Beat on medium speed for 20 minutes.
2. Pour into a greased tube pan and place in a cold oven. Turn oven to 350° and bake for 1 hour till golden brown and a toothpick comes out clean.
3. Cool 20 minutes before removing from pan.
4. Run a knife around the perimeter and tube sides to loosen, then invert on a plate.
5. Dust top with powdered sugar.

jan hagels

These cookies are delicious as a treat year round. They are so easy to make and the almond flavor is wonderful.

Ingredients

1 cup butter
1 cup sugar
1 egg, separated
1 tsp almond extract
2 cups flour
1/2 cup blanched sliced almonds
1 Tbs sugar
1/4 tsp cinnamon

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°.
2. Beat butter and sugar with an electric mixer at high speed until fluffy. Add egg yolk and almond extract. Stir in flour.
3. Turn dough on to an ungreased 15 x 10 x 1 jelly roll pan or a similar size cookie sheet with raised sides. Spread evenly to edges.
4. Beat egg white till foamy with very soft peaks. Spread over dough, sprinkle nuts over entire top. Combine 1 Tbs sugar with cinnamon and sprinkle over top.

5. Bake 25 minutes. Cool 10 minutes. Cut into diamond shapes. Finish cooling in pan before removing to a plate to serve. Yummy!

potluck supper apple cake

Most Amish farms include an apple orchard or at least a few trees, since apples are a staple in their diet. This makes a large size dessert and is great if you need to use up some fresh apples, and even if you don't. Everyone will love it. Serves 15-18.

Ingredients

4 cups diced apples
2 cups sugar
2 eggs
1 cup oil
1 tsp vanilla
1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp salt
1 tsp cinnamon
2 cups flour
1 cup chopped walnuts

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 325°. Prepare a 9 x 13 pan with grease and flour.
2. Do not use an electric mixer. In a mixing bowl, combine apples cinnamon, and sugar thoroughly.
3. Add eggs, oil, vanilla, soda, and salt. Stir gently.
4. Add flour then nuts. Turn into prepared pan. Bake 1 hour and 20 minutes.
5. Serve with ice cream or whipped cream.