

Peach pie perfection

Raven Brault shares the secrets to her award-winning pie

BY CHRISTINA AMMON

Entering a pie contest isn't something Applegate resident Raven Brault normally would do. But at the urging of a friend (me!), she decided to enter the Jacksaphine Count(ry) Fair contest.

In case you missed it, the count(ry) fair was a fundraiser for A Greater Applegate. Local musicians, food vendors, and community groups gathered to celebrate all things Applegate—including pie.

Raven's peach trees were overloaded with ripe fruit, so a peach pie seemed like a good bet! The choice also fit her own preferences for desserts that are humble, beautiful, and showcase the best fresh fruit available.

Aside from sourcing great peaches, she employed other tricks as well—such as keeping the dough cold, not handling it too much, and even using vodka in the crust, which keeps the glutens from over forming. These are all strategies she picked up in her long experience working at restaurants around the country.

"I love the science of baking," she says, opening an illustrated recipe booklet she used in a kindergarten class. She has been experimenting with making cookies, cakes, and pies her whole life. "I love the art of it too."

Raven's baking efforts paid off—she walked away with the blue ribbon at the fair. The judges—food writer Sarah Lemon, Jackson County Commissioner



Raven Brault won the pie contest at AGA's Jacksaphine Count(ry) Fair with her peach pie. See recipe below. Photo: Tim Daw.

Dave Dotterer, author Paul Fattig, and the *Applegater* Editor in Chief Barbara Holiday—described it as "old-school peach perfection." One said he'd never had a pie like it before.

Friends sometimes urge Raven to open a bakery in the Applegate, but she hesitates. "I like to stay flexible to travel," she says. "Having a pastry shop really takes up your life. You have to get up at 2 or 3 am in order to open by 7 am. Then you're closed by 2 pm, but have to start planning for the next day, accounting, managing staff..."

So, for now, she'll stick with the joy of baking for family and friends. If she needs to feel the rush of baking professionally, she contents herself with watching *The Great British Bake Off*.

Her main advice to aspiring bakers? Have patience, drop the stress, and keep perspective. "If you screw up, don't worry about it. Try again...it's just pie!"

Christina Ammon
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Raven's First-place Peach Pie Recipe

Makes one 9-inch pie
Preheat oven to 400 degrees

Combine in a large bowl:

1/2 cup sugar
1/4 cup brown sugar
4-1/2 cups sliced peaches (you can peel if you want)
Cover and leave alone for 1 hour.



Roll out pie dough of your choice and place bottom in pie plate and top on a cookie sheet and put in refrigerator to keep cold. If you are doing lattice strips, cut and place on cookie sheet and put in refrigerator.

After an hour, drain peaches and *save the juice*. Put peaches in large bowl. You should have about one cup of juice.

Combine in a small saucepan:

1/4 cup of cornstarch
1/4 tsp cinnamon (no more!)
1/8 tsp salt
Juice from peaches
Whisk to combine. Bring to a boil and simmer for two minutes, constantly stirring (mixture will be very thick).
Add 2 tsp lemon juice and 1 tbs butter.

Fold this mixture into the peaches, pour into bottom crust, put top dough on and crimp sides (or create a lattice top), then cut 4-6 vent slits into top. Sprinkle top with granulated or very coarse sugar (Sparkle sugar).

Bake for 40-50 minutes or until internal temperature is about 200 degrees. Cover edges with foil or pie-baking shield to prevent burning. Best baked in a glass pie dish for even cooking. Enjoy!

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Visit the "News & Stories" section of Applegate Valley Connect (applegateconnect.org) for recipes of the other pies in the contest: Kevin Adamson's apple-peach-pecan pie with pear-jam glaze, Michael Golden's Reese banana cream pie, and Janeen Sathre's plum pie.

A pie flop

BY DIANA COOGLE

I perked up at news of A Greater Applegate's pie contest for the Jacksaphine Count(ry) Fair last September. I have entered baking contests before, and I'm pretty good at pies, I thought, so off I went, determined to win or at least to make a good showing.

Pies had to be fruit pies, and each contestant had to bake two of the same kind, one for the judges and one to be auctioned off. Besides taste and appearance, pies would be judged on use of local products.

I decided to make a razzle dazzle raspberry pie, which I had made before, to great success. Ingredients included six cups of raspberries and a half-cup of amaretto besides the obligatory sugar, flour, and butter. Cheryl Bruner, in Williams, sold me raspberries from her bushes. I didn't know where I could get local butter, and I didn't know anyone who made amaretto, but I figured I would get a lot of points if I used a locally made flour. Unfortunately, my first choice was no longer making flour, so I went to another source, just outside the Applegate. Even though the flour wasn't *Applegate* local, it was a whole lot more local than wherever Gold Medal or Pillsbury flour comes from.

This source, however, didn't make a nice, light white flour, so I bought their whole wheat pastry flour instead.

The day before the fair, I began making my pies. I made the raspberry-amaretto filling, then turned to the crusts.

To my dismay, the whole wheat pastry flour wasn't working, even combined with white flour. I just could not make the first pie dough roll out in a nice, stretchy circle, and it fell apart when I tried to lift it into the pie pan. In despair, I pushed it into the pan, filled it with the raspberry-amaretto mixture, and baked it, anyway.

It was a flamboyant kitchen failure. The whole-wheat-heavy crust didn't



I tossed a similar-looking failure of a pie crust in the trash.

hold together and was doughy besides. I salvaged the raspberries and threw the crust into the garbage. There would be no Diana Coogle razzle-dazzle raspberry pie at the Jacksaphine Count(ry) Fair.

The second pie turned out better. The crust rolled into the pie pan in one piece, and the pie looked good when it came out of the oven, except that it was too dark, not because it was overdone but because the cinnamon sprinkled on top blended into the darker flour. It wasn't pretty, and, anyway, I had already blown my chances at the pie contest with the kitchen failure of the first pie.

I had raspberry-amaretto topping on yogurt for breakfast the next three days. I froze the second pie.

Two months later, I thawed the pie to share with friends when we went wine tasting at Guzzo's. Too nervous to trust my culinary talents anymore, I ate a slice before I left. It was delicious. And when I served it to Barbara and Jeanette, they declared it a great pie.

It wouldn't have won, though, even if I had had two pies for the contest. The crust was too heavy for the filling, and though the raspberries were razzle-dazzle brilliant, the uncut pie was not pretty. I was reminded of losing a pie contest years ago because I had made my pecan pie with honey instead of sugar to be healthier. Now I had lost even the possibility of entering a pie contest by using local flour, to gain favor with the judges, even though it was whole wheat pastry flour instead of pie-crust-reliable, though not local, supermarket white flour.

The winning pie of the Jacksaphine Fair, that great peach pie, sold for \$200 at the auction. Next year we'll see how much a razzle-dazzle raspberry pie, with Gold Medal flour for the crust, will bring in.

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Diana Coogle, former journalism instructor at Rogue Community College, JPR commentator for 20 years, and current head copy editor for the *Applegater*, will teach a workshop in journalism writing at Ruch Library from 1-5 pm Saturday, February 10.


The emphasis will be on journalistic form—how to find a lead, how to organize the material, how to interest the reader, how to incorporate pertinent information, and how to write concisely, correctly, and engagingly. The format will be lecture-practice-discussion, in workshop style, with breaks and refreshments.

This free class is open to all interested participants. Contact Diana Coogle at diana@applegater.org for more information or to sign up for the class.



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