

Coconut Cream Pie submitted by Debbie Westwood

I am not a baker. That honor goes to my spouse whose dad was a bagel maker and whose mom was also an accomplished baker. But once in a while I've been told to "just bring dessert" to a potluck. This dish, from Isa Chandra Moskowitz, is a recent discovery of mine that I was delighted to discover I could actually make! What's more, it is sinfully indulgent and probably the least healthy thing I make.

This recipe uses matzo meal, and as such is suitable for Passover. However, if you can't find vegan, gluten-free matzoh meal, you can substitute with a purée of dates and almonds. This recipe does have a "refrigerate" time of 5+ hours, so you might want to do the bulk of the work the evening before. This pie also freezes quite well.

Crust ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups matzoh meal
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- ¼ tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/8 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1/8 tsp salt
- ¼ cup coconut oil, melted
- 2-3 tbsp water

Crust method:

1. Preheat the oven to 350F.
2. In a large mixing bowl, combine the matzoh meal, brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt.
3. Drizzle in the coconut oil and mix well with your fingertips.
4. Add water by the tablespoon until the crust just holds together (like wet sand).
5. Press the crust into a 9" pie plate.
6. Bake the crust in the preheated oven for 15 minutes.
7. Remove from the oven and set aside.

Filling ingredients:

- ½ cup raw cashews, soaked in water for at least 2 hours and drained
- One 14 oz can coconut milk at room temperature
- ¾ cup unsweetened plant-based milk (I like soy – almond also works)
- 2/3 cup sugar
- ½ tsp agar powder
- 3 tbsp coconut oil
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- 1 tsp coconut extract (optional – can substitute with an extra tsp of vanilla)
- 1 ½ cups shredded, unsweetened coconut (find a brand that is finely shredded – it'll be easier to mix. Bob's Red Mill is one option)

Filling method:

1. Combine the cashews and coconut milk in a blender; purée until completely smooth. (I recommend a high-powered blender for this, such as a BlendTec or Vitamix).
2. Stir together the plant-based milk, sugar, and agar powder in a 2 quart saucepan.
3. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring consistently.

4. Once boiling, reduce the heat to low so you're getting just small bubbles.
5. Cook the mixture for about 5-7 minutes, then add the coconut oil and stir until melted.
6. Start up the blender again on low.
7. Working quickly, stream the hot, plant-based milk and agar mixture into the cashew/coconut milk mixture until thoroughly blended.
8. Add the vanilla and coconut extracts to the mixture in the blender; pulse a few times to mix.
9. Stir in the shredded coconut – do NOT blend; you want the shredded coconut to remain intact.
10. Pour the mixture to the prepared pie crust and refrigerate until set – at least 5 hours.
The mixture is quite thin at first – it will thicken. Don't overfill – the quantity given seems to make way more filling than would ever fit into a 9" pie crust!

Ganache ingredients:

- ¼ cup coconut milk from a well-stirred can
- 6 ounces bittersweet vegan chocolate

Ganache method:

1. Once the pie filling has set, bring the ¼ cup of coconut milk to a boil in a small saucepan.
2. Lower the heat, add the chocolate, and let it melt.
3. Stir continuously with a rubber or silicone spatula.
4. Once the chocolate is completely melted, remove the pan from the heat and let it sit for 10 minutes or so.
5. Remove the pie from the fridge and pour the ganache over the pie. It will be very thick, so you might want to use a warmed metal spreader to smooth it out over the pie.
6. Let the pie set in a cool place (the fridge is best here in Phoenix) for about an hour, and then serve.
7. If you're not serving immediately, cover and refrigerate; or freeze.