

Aunt Sarah's Plum Cake (Pie)

Posted on [Entertain the Possibilities](#) blog

Recipe by Sarah Lev, lovingly reinterpreted by Ilise Goldberg



INGREDIENTS:

- 2 Cups Flour
- ¾ Stick (6 Tablespoons) Frozen Butter (shredded)
- ½ Cup Crisco
- 1 Tablespoon Sugar
- ¼ Teaspoon Salt
- ¼ Teaspoon Baking Powder
- 1 Egg Yolk
- 3 Tablespoons Milk
- 2 Tablespoons Whisky (I used Jack Daniels, but any whisky will do)
- 1 Cup Sugar
- 2 ½ Tablespoons Cornstarch (possibly more if the plums are very juicy)
- 1 Cup of Corn Flakes
- 3 Pounds of Plums (preferably Damson, but any variety will work), cut in quarters or halves depending upon the size of the plum
- ½ - ¾ Cup Sugar (the more tart the plum, the more sugar you'll want to use)

DIRECTIONS:

- Preheat oven to 400 and grease and flour a 9 inch springform pan.
- Mix the egg yolk, milk and whisky in a small dish and set aside.
- Grate the frozen butter with a cheese grater (use the large shred size).
- Put the flour, butter, Crisco, salt, and baking powder in a Cuisinart and then add the liquid mix. Pulse in the Cuisinart until well combined.
- Empty the crust onto a cutting board and form into a ball.

- The crust needs to go up the sides of the pan to about ½ - 1 inch from the top – so at this point you have two choices depending upon which one you think will be easier. You can roll the crust out on a floured board to make it easier to have a consistent thickness or you can use your hands to fit the dough into the spring form. I tried both methods and I had better success rolling it out and then putting the dough in the spring form – even though I ended up putting it into the pan in pieces.
- Once the dough has been put in the spring form, sprinkle a cup or a bit more of corn flakes on the bottom of the pan to cover the bottom.
- Combine the cornstarch with one cup of sugar and sprinkle evenly over the corn flakes.
- Place the plums over the sugar in two layers, and then evenly sprinkle ½ to ¾ cup of sugar over the plums. The Damson plums I used were very small, so I cut them in half (not smaller) and ended up putting in three layers of plums. I still had some plums left over from my three pounds, but if I'd only done two layers I wouldn't have used enough plums. The first time I made the cake I used a different variety that was larger, in that case I quartered the plums and only did two layers.
- Bake in the oven for about 1 – 1 ¼ hours. Rotate halfway through. Let cool on a cooling rack for several hours until cool. I cooked the cake in a 400° F. oven with the convection feature and 1 hour was sufficient.
- Let the cake cool completely on a cooling rack – this will take several hours. Once cool run a flat knife around the cake before trying to remove the side of the spring form – this will help if plum juice has adhered to the side of the pan. Serve the cake by itself or with vanilla ice cream.

A Word Damson Plums:

Apparently my Aunt Sarah would make this recipe with Damson plums. Damson plums are dark blue with astringent skins and dry, sour flesh. When cooked their tartness and spiciness are ideal for making preserves or for this recipe. Cooked down, the damson's astringency disappears, and its tannic skin imparts a magenta color and rich, spicy flavor, while its abundant pectin confers a lusciously thick and smooth consistency. It keeps its shape pretty well too. Due to the nature of this plum the juice doesn't run as much so the two and one-half tablespoons of cornstarch identified above should be fine. With other varieties of plums I recommend using an extra tablespoon of cornstarch.

What Went Wrong the First Time?

I did not blend the crust well enough – I still had some big chunks of frozen butter – I was afraid to overwork the dough, but having the big chunks of butter was worse. When I made the cake the second time I shredded the frozen butter and I made sure that all ingredients were well blended.

The first time I made the cake I had a hard time getting the dough to cover all areas of the spring form – I kept moving bits and pieces and ended up with some areas that didn't have much coverage or the coverage it had was butter chunks – this caused big issues later on in

terms of being able to remove the pie from the bottom of the pan when serving. The second time I rolled out the crust first and then put it into the springform pan. This worked much better thanks to an even thickness of the crust; I didn't have to overwork it into the pan. With this second version there was no issue of crust sticking to the pan. This is not a typical pie crust, it's almost more like a shortbread crust.