

fruitful endeavors

Pastries piled high with peaches, plums, cherries and berries rekindle memories of summers past.

When my daughter was a young child, she'd accompany me on summer berry picking adventures, the two of us wandering waist-deep in wild raspberry patches along winding back roads, losing ourselves and our way. The scratches and gritty dust we acquired were worth it, since we ate as many berries as we dropped into our buckets (or, as I got more efficient, into our resealable plastic bags).

Today we favor local pick-your-own berry farms, where our eyes become invariably bigger than our freezer space. A morning spent picking means an afternoon baking pies, tarts and cobblers. One year we gathered so many raspberries that I couldn't face another pie — I simply cooked the remaining basketful with sugar, added boiling water, and produced a wonderful raspberry tea!

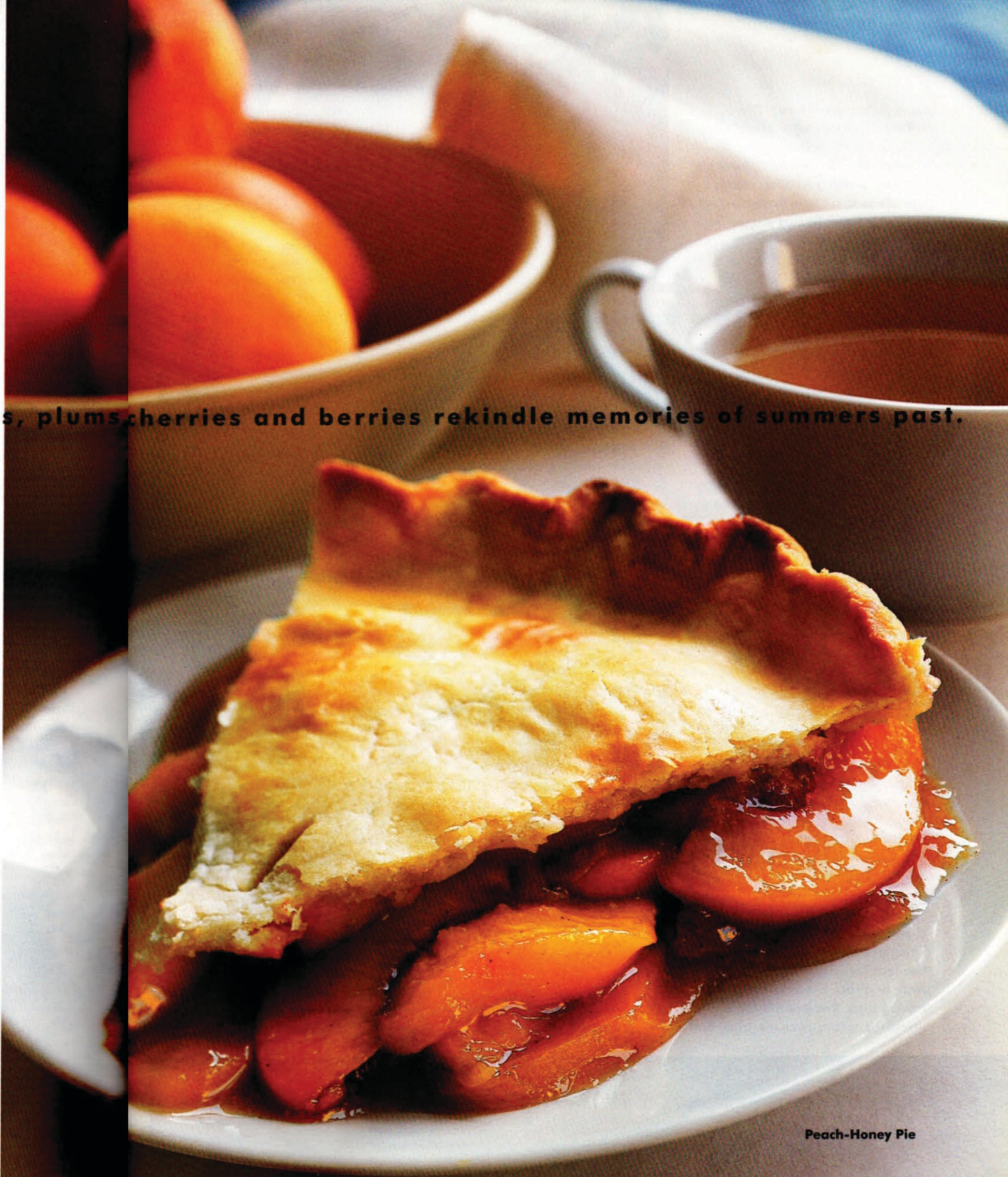
Almost as marvelous as home-baked summer-fruit desserts are those found at country fairs. One of my favorite fairs is on the green of a small New England town, where the Ladies' Aid Society bake sale regularly surprises and delights local palates. And it was at a Vermont town picnic that I first learned of Boycatcher Pie — tasty blueberry or cherry pie that's "guaranteed to catch your boy."

As each berry or fruit takes its turn on the calendar, from the first ruby strawberries of May to the small, blue Italian prune plums of late August and early September, I dream of pastry presentations. While it's true that ripe fruit is delicious unadorned, eating it out of hand is not to be compared to the sublime creation of it encased in a light, crisp, slightly sweet pastry. But of course, that's the problem: Most fruits have no fat, but that butter-rich pastry gets you every time.

For the past few years, I have tested and tasted and worked to develop pastry recipes with deep flavor and good texture but reduced saturated fat and cholesterol. My philosophy is to use all natural ingredients — no artificial sweeteners or egg substitutes — and to scale back the use of butter and eggs, but not cut out the good stuff entirely. (After publishing two books and several hundred recipes on the subject, I can assure you that luscious pastries cannot be fat-free.) Calories also are reduced where possible, but for desserts, they, too, cannot be dropped dramatically without losing flavor. For example, liqueurs often are called for, which add a few calories. Leave them out if you must, but their absence will be noticeable.

To help rekindle memories of fruit and fancy in the sun-drenched days of your past, here are five recipes that highlight the best of summer's bounty. Whether you serve them at elegant gatherings or at backyard barbecues, these pastries will look fabulous, taste divine and fit easily into your healthful diet.

By Susan G. Purdy



Peach-Honey Pie

Peach-Honey Pie

This pie's tender, sugar-glazed pastry crust has no cholesterol and one-seventh the saturated fat of butter pie crusts. Omitting a bottom crust is a good way to cut fat in many pies, with no loss in flavor. Be sure you use fresh, not stale, canola oil, or the crust will taste too strongly of oil.

Serves 10

Pastry

- 1 cup unsifted all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- ½ cup canola oil
- 1½ tablespoons skim milk, or as needed

Filling

- 7 cups ripe peeled peach or nectarine slices
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ½ cup packed light brown sugar
- ¼ cup honey
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- 3 tablespoons quick-cooking tapioca
- 2 tablespoons skim milk
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar

Position a rack in center of oven and preheat oven to 425° F.

To prepare pastry: Stir together flour, salt and sugar in a mixing bowl. Drizzle in oil and milk; toss lightly with a fork until crumbly. Pinch dough together; if it's too dry and doesn't hold well, add an extra drop or two of milk. Gather dough into a ball, wrap in plastic and refrigerate while making filling.

Combine all filling ingredients in a 9-inch pie plate; gently toss to coat until tapioca is well-moistened.

Roll out pastry between 2 14-inch sheets of lightly floured wax paper, lifting and repositioning the paper as needed. Roll into a 10-inch circle or oval, or about 1 inch larger than the baking dish. Remove the top paper, invert the pastry over the fruit, and



peel off backing paper.

Since this is an informal pastry, let cracks in the dough serve as steam vents; or if you prefer, patch them by brushing with a little milk and pressing on scraps of dough. Leaving about a 1-inch overhang, trim excess pastry; fold under the overhang and crimp it along the rim of the plate. To glaze, brush pastry with skim milk and sprinkle with sugar. If you've patched the cracks, cut several slits in the pastry with the tip of a paring knife for steam vents.

Bake at 425° F for 10 minutes, then reduce heat to 350° F and bake 25 to 30 minutes longer, until pastry is golden brown and fruit is tender when pierced with a sharp knife through a steam vent. Check pie halfway through cooking time: Cover it loosely with foil (shiny side down) if it's overbrowning. Cool on wire rack; serve warm.

Per slice: 232 calories, 29 percent fat (7.4 grams), 67 percent carbohydrates, 4 percent protein.

Lazy Days Fresh Fruit Tart

In this colorful open-faced tart, orange cream filling complements the flavors of fresh summer fruit. Make the crust and filling up to a day ahead, then assemble the pie a few hours before serving to allow the flavors to merge.

Serves 10

Crumb Crust

- 1½ cups graham cracker crumbs (24 squares, crushed)

- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons water, or as needed

Filling

- ½ cup nonfat sour cream
- 1 tablespoon frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed
- 2 teaspoons grated orange zest
- ½ cup light cream cheese (in tub, not fat-free), room temperature
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon

Fruit

- 3 to 4 cups fresh ripe fruit, rinsed and patted dry: mixed berries (hulled) and/or peaches, nectarines or kiwi (peeled, sliced), fresh cherries (stemmed, pitted and halved) and seedless grapes (halved)

Glaze

- 1 cup apricot preserves
- 2 tablespoons orange-flavored liqueur, optional

Position a rack in center of oven and preheat oven to 350° F.

To prepare crust: In a mixing bowl, toss together crumbs, sugar, cinnamon, oil, butter and water, stirring until crumbs are evenly moistened and cling together when squeezed; add a few extra drops of water as necessary. Turn into a 9- or 10-inch pie plate, cover with plastic wrap (to prevent crumbs from sticking to your fingers), and press crumbs evenly around sides and bottom of plate.

Bake crust in center of oven 8 minutes or until slightly darkened in color. Cool completely on wire rack before filling or refrigerating, wrapped in plastic, for later use.

To prepare filling: In a food processor or blender, combine sour cream, juice concentrate, orange zest, cream cheese, sugar and cinnamon. Pulse until smooth;

Lazy Days Fresh
Fruit Tart



Kitchen Tip Peaches and nectarines are easiest to peel when they've been blanched (dropped into a large pot of boiling water for about 2 minutes). Remove fruit with a slotted spoon to a bowl of ice water. Drain when fruit is cool. The skins should slip off easily.

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Tulip Cups

do not overwork or mixture will be too thin. Chill at least 1 hour, covered.

Spread cream over crumb crust, then top with prepared fruit arranged in concentric circles. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours or until serving.

To prepare glaze: No more than 2 hours before serving, stir preserves in a small saucepan over low heat until melted. Strain through a sieve, add liqueur if using and bring mixture to a boil over medium heat. Stir, boiling, for 1 minute. With pastry brush, coat tops of fruit. Chill to set glaze.

Per slice: 269 calories, 26 percent fat (7.8 grams), 68 percent carbohydrate, 6 percent protein.

Tulip Cups With Fresh Berries and Cream (cover recipe)

Molding these wafer-thin, orange-scented cookies into tulip shapes is child's play, but the presentation is glamorous. Prepare them up to a day ahead, then fill with this luscious light cream and your favorite berries just before serving.

Serves 8

Tulip Cups

- Butter-flavored nonstick cooking spray**
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons unsifted all-purpose flour**
- ¼ teaspoon salt**
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar**
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly**
- 2 tablespoons canola oil**
- 2 large egg whites**
- 2 teaspoons grated orange zest**
- ½ teaspoon orange extract**
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract**

Filling

- 3 to 4 cups fresh ripe mixed berries (such as strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, huckleberries, boysenberries) hulled, rinsed and blotted dry on paper towels**
- 2 tablespoons light brown sugar**
- 1 teaspoon grated orange zest**
- 2 tablespoons orange-flavored liqueur or dark rum, optional**
- 1 cup nonfat vanilla yogurt**

- ½ cup crushed low-fat granola cereal or 6–8 Amaretti (Italian macaroon) cookies, crumbled**
- 2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar**

Position a rack in center of oven and preheat oven to 400° F. Coat cookie sheets with nonstick cooking spray. Set out cookie molds: either 3 juice glasses with 2¼- to 2½-inch bottom diameters, turned upside down, or a 2½-inch-diameter muffin tin.

To prepare cookies*: Sift together flour, salt and sugar in a mixing bowl. In a second bowl, whisk together melted butter, oil, egg whites, orange zest and extracts. Slowly whisk in dry ingredients until smooth.

Using a large spoon, drop 1 generous tablespoon of batter for each wafer onto cookie sheet (allow only 2 or 3 wafers per sheet). Use the back of the spoon to spread batter into 4- to 5-inch disks and smooth out holes or bubbles. Leave at least 3 inches between wafers. Bake wafers for 4 to 5 minutes, until golden on top and golden brown on edges. Do not overbake or cookies will harden too quickly.

Place cookie sheet on a wire rack and immediately use a spatula or pancake turner to lift each warm wafer off the sheet and place it on its mold. If using a glass as a mold, center the wafer over the bottom of the glass and pinch the

edges of the wafer slightly — the wafer takes shape in a minute or two as it cools and crisps. For a muffin tin mold, gently press wafer into a muffin cup.

When the first batch of wafers are crisp, remove from molds and repeat process with remaining batter. (If batter gets too thick to spread easily, whisk in 1 or 2 teaspoons water.) Store tulips in an airtight container. (They wilt and flatten in damp weather; to re crisp before serving, form cup shapes in muffin tins and return to 325° F oven for 3 to 5 minutes; cool in tins, remove when crisp.)

To prepare filling: In a mixing bowl, gently toss berries with brown sugar, orange zest and liqueur, if using. Shortly before serving (the wafers soften on standing), place 2 tablespoons of yogurt in the bottom of a tulip cookie, add a generous helping of berries and a sprinkling of granola or Amaretti. Dust with confectioners' sugar and serve.

* The cookie batter will make about 10 tulips, which allows for breakage; recipe is based on 8 filled cookies.

Per serving (1 filled tulip): 205 calories, 26 percent fat (5.9 grams), 67 percent carbohydrate, 7 percent protein.

Plum Crostata

A crostata is a free-form pie, rather like a pizza, in which the rolled dough is topped with sugared fruit. Although there is no fat in the fruit filling, the pastry tastes very rich and contains a touch of butter and reduced-fat cream cheese.

Serves 12

Pastry

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- 1½ cups unsifted all-purpose flour**
- ¾ teaspoon salt**
- 1½ tablespoons granulated sugar**
- ½ cup light cream cheese (in tub, not fat-free), well-chilled**
- 3 tablespoons canola oil**

Topping

- 5½ cups sliced ripe sweet plums, such as Emperor or Santa Rosa, unpeeled**
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice**
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar**
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon**
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg**

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Pastries

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- 1½ tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 large egg white
- 2 teaspoons water
- ¼ cup apricot, peach or plum preserves
- ¼ cup rice cereal or low-fat graham cracker crumbs
- 1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar, for garnish

To prepare pastry: In a small saucepan, melt butter over medium heat for 3 or 4 minutes until it turns golden brown and has a nutty aroma, but don't let it burn. Transfer to a heatproof bowl and chill several minutes until solidified.

In mixing bowl, toss together flour, salt and sugar. Add solidified butter and cream cheese. With fingertips or a pastry blender, work the mixture to create small flakes. Add oil and blend with a fork. Pinch dough between your fingers; if it doesn't hold well, add a drop or two of water. Mold into a ball and wrap in plastic. Chill while preparing topping.

Position a rack in center of oven and preheat oven to 425° F.

To prepare topping: In a large bowl, toss plums, lemon juice, 2 tablespoons sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg and flour.

Place an 18-inch square piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil shiny-side down on the counter; lightly sprinkle with flour. With a toothpick, using a large pot lid or bowl as a guide, draw a circle 14 inches in diameter on the foil. Shape the dough into a flat disk, set it in the center of the circle and cover with lightly floured wax paper or plastic wrap. Roll dough into a 14-inch disk to fit the marked circle (dough should be about ¼-inch thick). As an alternative, use your fingers to press the dough out into a disk, working through a piece of plastic wrap to avoid sticking.

Slide foil and dough onto a large cookie sheet; peel off wax paper or

plastic. Use a toothpick to lightly mark a 12-inch circle on the dough disk, leaving a 2-inch wide dough border.

In a small bowl, beat together egg white and water. Working inside the 12-inch circle, paint on some egg glaze with a pastry brush, then spread on the fruit preserves and sprinkle with crushed cereal or crumbs to absorb excess fruit juice. Arrange plum slices over crumbs.

Use a spatula dipped in flour to loosen the 2-inch border of dough. Gently fold it onto the edge of the fruit, allowing it to fold over itself in pleats. Any cracks can be brushed with egg glaze and pressed together.

Brush egg glaze over dough border, then sprinkle border with the remaining tablespoon of granulated sugar.

Bake for 15 minutes; reduce heat to

assembling this dessert; a simple look adds to its charm.

Serves 10

Filling

- 5 to 6 cups unpeeled and thinly sliced ripe nectarines
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ¾ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar

Crust

- 1 large egg
- 3 tablespoons canola oil
- ¾ cup buttermilk
- 1½ cups unsifted all-purpose flour
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 5 tablespoons granulated sugar

Position a rack in the center of oven and preheat oven to 375° F.

To prepare filling: In a large bowl, toss sliced nectarines with lemon juice, nutmeg and 2 tablespoons sugar. Spread mixture evenly in a 10-inch deep-dish pie plate.

To prepare crust: In a large bowl, whisk together egg, oil and buttermilk. Set a strainer over the bowl and add flour, baking powder, salt, nutmeg and 3 tablespoons of sugar. Stir the dry ingredients with a spoon, sifting them through the strainer into egg mixture. Stir together well.

Spoon an even layer of batter over the fruit in the pie plate. Sprinkle remaining sugar over the top. Bake about 35 minutes, until golden brown on top and a cake tester inserted into the crust comes out clean. Cool a few minutes on a wire rack and serve warm.

Per slice: 205 calories, 23 percent fat (5.2 grams), 69 percent carbohydrate, 8 percent protein.



350° F and bake 20 minutes more, or until pastry is golden brown and fruit slices are tender when pierced with the tip of a sharp knife. Cool on a wire rack. To serve, dust with confectioners' sugar and cut into wedges.

Per slice: 273 calories, 30 percent fat (9.2 grams), 64 percent carbohydrate, 6 percent protein.

Nectarine Nutmeg Cobbler
Cobblers are a New England specialty. The term itself is believed to refer to the cobbled, or patched, look of the top crust. Don't be fussy when

Susan G. Purdy is the author of *Let Them Eat Cake* (William Morrow, 1997) and *Have Your Cake and Eat It, Too* (William Morrow, 1993), which was named winner of the *Julia Child Cookbook Award* in the category of diet and health.