

Foolproof Pie Dough

From Cook's Illustrated. Makes enough for one 9-inch double-crust pie.

Gluten forms readily in water, but it won't form in alcohol. By replacing some of the water in our recipe with vodka (which contains 40 percent ethanol but just 60 percent water), we're able to add more liquid to the dough so it stays soft and malleable, but without increasing the danger of the crust turning tough. (Note: Any 80-proof spirit will work. The alcohol burns off in the oven, along with any flavor.)

3. Sprinkle vodka and water over mixture. With rubber spatula, use folding motion to mix, pressing down on dough until dough is slightly tacky and sticks together. Divide dough into 2 even balls and flatten each into 4-inch disk. Wrap each in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 45 minutes for up to 2 days.

Ingredients

- 2 1/2 cups (12 1/2 ounces) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon table salt
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 12 tablespoons (1 1/2 sticks) cold unsalted butter, cut into 1/4-inch slices
- 1/2 cup chilled solid vegetable shortening, cut into 4 pieces
- 1/4 cup vodka, cold
- 1/4 cup cold water

Directions

1. Process 1 1/2 cups flour, salt, and sugar in food processor until combined, about two 1-second pulses. Add butter and shortening and process until homogeneous dough just starts to collect in uneven clumps, about 15 seconds (dough will resemble cottage cheese curds and there should be no uncoated flour). Scrape bowl with rubber spatula and redistribute dough evenly around processor blade.
2. Add remaining cup flour and pulse until mixture is evenly distributed around bowl and mass of dough has been broken up, 4 to 6 quick pulses. Empty mixture into medium bowl.