

# Lemon Meringue Pie – Paul Magowan

## Preamble

This is one of my favourite pies.

Not to be out-done with the historical perspective provided by others in previous recipes, I was introduced to this pie by my German Mother. She mentioned that the recipe went back to the days when the advent of electricity and electric beaters took over from the traditional frenzied hand whisking that up to then had been required to beat the egg whites for meringues.

There are three moving parts/components: the **pie crust** which must be pre-baked; the **lemon filling**; and the **meringue topping**.



## Ingredients:

Pie Crust	Filling	Meringue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 1/4 cups of flour</li><li>• 4 tblsp very cold water</li><li>• 1/2 cup butter, cold, and diced</li><li>• 1 tablespoon sugar</li><li>• 1/2 teaspoon fine salt</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 lemon, zested and juiced</li><li>• 1 cup orange juice (<b>OR</b> 4 extra lemons zested and juiced and 1/3 cup water)</li><li>• 2/3 cup sugar</li><li>• 4 tblsp cornstarch</li><li>• 3 egg yolks</li><li>• 2 tblsp butter</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3/4 cup sugar</li><li>• 3 egg whites</li><li>• 2 teaspoons cornstarch</li></ul>

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### Instructions – Pie Crust

- First make the pie crust: rub the flour and butter together between your fingertips or using a pastry cutter, until the chunks of butter are pea-sized. Stir through the sugar and salt. Pour the cold water into the rubble mixture, and use a knife to cut the water into the mix. When the dough starts to come together, use your hands to briefly knead it together into a cohesive dough. Wrap tightly in clingfilm and refrigerate for at least half an hour.
- On a floured surface, roll out the dough into an 11-inch circle. Roll this circle up onto a floured rolling pin, and then unroll it carefully over an 8- or 9-inch pie plate. Ease the pastry so it sits flush against the base and edge of the pie plate. Prick all over with a fork, place the whole thing on a baking tray, and refrigerate for at least half an hour.
- Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line the pastry case with baking paper, and fill with baking beans or other pastry weights eg dry rice, right up to the top of the case. Bake for 20 minutes, remove the baking beans and baking paper, and return to the oven for another 10 minutes. Set to one side to cool for fifteen minutes.

### Instructions – Filling

- Heat the lemon juice, orange juice, lemon zest and sugar together in a medium-sized sauce pan until the sugar dissolves. Make a slurry with the cornstarch and a little of the cold orange juice and add this to the lemon/OJ syrup: cook over a medium heat until the mixture gently boils and thickens, stirring from the bottom the whole time.
- Put the egg yolks in a heatproof bowl, and briefly whisk until the egg yolks are paler than before. Pour some of the hot lemon mixture over the egg yolks, whisking to combine (pour hot over cold...this is to prevent the egg yolks from scrambling). Return the mixture to the saucepan and the heat, and stir for a couple of minutes until thick. Stir through the butter until combined.
- Spoon the lemon mixture into the pie case.

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## Instructions – Meringue

- To make the French meringue, whisk the egg whites to soft peaks. Then add the sugar a tablespoon at a time, only adding the next tablespoon when the previous one is fully incorporated. Whisk until the meringue forms stiff peaks and is thick and glossy. Briefly whisk in the cornstarch.
- Spoon the meringue onto the pie case, starting at the edges, making sure it touches the pastry (this will form a seal for the pie). Pile the centre of the pie high with meringue. If you prefer a crispy meringue top, as I do, then bake for an hour at a low heat, 200F.
- This is the most difficult step. Allow to cool before slicing and tucking in. I serve with a dollop of whipped organic cream and savour with a cup of fresh coffee..

## Enjoy

## Background

I recently found this write-up in the Spectator which I have adapted. I also thought it summed the pie up very well.

I often find myself turning to lemon-filled recipes in winter. I think it's something my baking subconscious realises before I do - that cold, dark days require the antithesis, something bright and bold, something cheering. You know what they say: when life gives you lemons, make lemon meringue pie.

Unlike its austere, pared back French cousin, the tarte au citron, the lemon meringue pie is never going to be a subtle pudding: a lurid, chartreuse centre hidden by big billows of toasted meringue, piled ludicrously, disproportionately, toweringly tall. It quivers and wobbles on the plate, crisp and firm on the outer edge, giving way to a marshmallowy interior. But that's the point isn't it? It isn't sophisticated or chic or cool. It's fun, and God, couldn't we all do with a bit of fun right now?

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The filling isn't quite a curd, although it looks like one. Instead, a slurry is made with the lemon juice, orange juice, sugar and cornstarch and brought to the boil to cook out the cornstarch and thicken the mixture. This is then used to temper the egg yolks, like you would if you were making a custard with milk. Its result is a really brightly flavoured lemon gel that sits neatly in the pastry case, and tastes thrillingly, zippily, mouth-puckeringly sweet-sour.

There's a certain logic to the dish, which I rather like. The lemon filling requires three egg yolks to enrich it into something luscious and smooth, while the meringue is made of three egg whites whisked to stiff peaks until glossy and thick – it's a symbiotic pie, nothing wasted. Italian or Swiss meringue, in which the egg whites are cooked during the meringue making process, have no place here. The meringue on an LMP (the lemon meringue pie is so far from formal, I feel comfortable abbreviating it) should be crisp when cooked, and a pale golden brown; it needs a period in the oven, not a blast from a blow torch.

I like an American-style pie crust for this pie, rather than something fancier. American pie dough is quick to pull together, easy to handle, and provides a nice, unsweetened contrast to the lemon and the meringue fillings. Stop short of completely combining the flour and butter, mixing the water into it when the butter is still pea-sized: this will form little pockets of butter in the pie dough, which will make the finished product.

This recipe will work in either an 8- or 9-inch pie plate, and the pastry shell can be made up to three days in advance, and kept refrigerated, or baked and kept in an airtight container.

Lemon meringue pie's only failing is its shelf-life: the French meringue sitting on the lemon gel means that it sags and weeps a little bit at the end of the day (don't we all, sometimes): so plan to enjoy the whole thing on the day of cooking. Living in a two-person household during lockdown ensures we have generously sized seconds!

Paul Magowan