

Keia's Muscadine Pie with Peanut Butter Streusel

This is an elegant, impressive pie with sophisticated flavors and textures, and the playful disposition of a classic peanut butter and grape jelly sandwich. In fact, Keia sometimes calls this her PB&J pie. The crumble will remind you of the best peanut cookie dough of your life, and it's tempting to gobble it all up before any of it makes it to the top of the pie. Keia is a pie expert. Everything she makes is delicious and gorgeous, including her perfect pie crust. With envy and admiration, I call her the Queen of Crimp.

Keia uses shrub in the filling, which is a slightly sweet and tangy fermented fruit beverage. (Her spouse, Jamie Swofford, makes and sells his shrub under the Old North Shrub brand). If you don't happen to have shrub on hand, she assures us that we can use additional lemon juice instead.

Let's be honest: It takes a little effort to prepare muscadines to use in a pie, but it's well worth it. A muscadine pie (which some cooks call a slip skin pie or grape hull pie because we slip the juicy grape pulp out of their hulls at one point) is one of the finest fresh fruit pies to be found. The aroma alone is heavenly.

Makes one 9-inch pie

Peanut Butter Crumble

1/2 cup old-fashioned rolled oats
1/2 cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup creamy peanut butter
6 tablespoons melted butter

Filling

9-inch pastry pie shell
2 pounds ripe, fragrant, purple muscadines
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
5 tablespoons cornstarch
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1/4 cup Old North Shrub State Grape or 2 additional tablespoons lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 large egg
1 large egg yolk

1. For the crumble: Toss together the oats, dark brown sugar, flour, and salt in a large bowl. Add the peanut butter and use fingertips to work it into the oat mixture. Stir in the melted butter. Cover and refrigerate until firm.
2. For the filling: Blind bake the pie shell and place on a wire rack to cool to room temperature.
3. Separate the muscadine skins from the pulp by gently squeezing each grape so that the pulp slips out of the skin. Collect the pulp and juice in a large saucepan and put the skins in a bowl.
4. Bring the pulp to a boil over medium-high heat, skimming away any foam. Strain the hot pulp through a sieve to remove the seeds, scraping and pressing firmly with a large spatula to extract as much pulp as possible. (Alternatively, run the pulp through a food mill.) Discard the seeds.
5. Finely chop the skins in a food processor or with a knife, and then stir them into the strained puree.
6. Stir in the granulated sugar, light brown sugar, cornstarch, lemon juice, shrub (if using, or additional lemon juice), salt, ginger, allspice, and cinnamon. Cook over medium heat until the mixture bubbles and thickens, stirring slowly and continuously, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and let stand until cooled to room temperature. Whisk the egg and egg yolk into the filling.
7. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Pour the cooled filling into the baked and cooled pie shell. Top with crumble, breaking it into bite-size clumps.
8. Place the pie on a baking sheet (to collect any drips) and bake in the center of the oven until the crumble is golden brown and the filling bubbles around the edges, about 45 minutes. Place on a wire rack to cool to room temperature before serving.

Make-Ahead Note: The filling can be made through Step 6 up to one day ahead. Store covered and refrigerated.