

Mini Kentucky Race Day Chocolate Bourbon Pecan Pies with Pancetta Crust

Due to copyright issues, we cannot call these chocolate bourbon pecan pies Which-Must-Not-Be-Named after that famous Kentucky horse race where attendees wear fabulous hats while imbibing mint juleps. We've added a pancetta-studded crust to these two-biters to offset the sweetness. And when pouring the filling into the pastry cups, try not to get drips around the edges of the pastry or the pies will stick to the pan and be very difficult to unmold.

See Cook's Note on how to get even more pancetta flavor in the crust.

Ingredients

dough

4 ounces thinly sliced pancetta, chopped (about 1 cup)
1¼ cups all-purpose flour, plus additional for dusting
1 tablespoon sugar
1/8 teaspoon fine salt
1 stick unsalted butter, cut into small cubes
1 tablespoon ice cold vodka
1 to 3 tablespoons ice cold water, plus more if needed
Nonstick cooking spray or oil for the muffin tins

filling (cutting this in half for the retest – amounts shown are halved)

1 large egg
1/4 cup light corn syrup
1/4 cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
3 tablespoons good bourbon
1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted and cooled (but still liquid)
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
Pinch fine salt
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup bittersweet or semisweet chocolate chips
1/2 cup pecans (3 ounces), toasted and chopped

special equipment

food processor
3-inch cookie or biscuit cutter
Two 12-cup or one 24-cup mini muffin tin

Directions

for the dough

Cook the pancetta in a nonstick, 10-inch skillet over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until crisp, about 12 minutes. Remove the pancetta from the pan with a slotted spoon to a paper towel-lined plate. Reserve the fat for another use (yum, scrambled eggs).

In a food processor fitted with the metal blade, process the pancetta with the flour until the pancetta is finely chopped, about 2 minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add the sugar and salt and pulse to mix. Scatter the cubes of butter over the flour mixture, and pulse until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Drizzle in the vodka and 1 tablespoon of the water and pulse until the mixture holds together when pinched between your fingers. Add more water, a teaspoon at a time, if needed. Gather the dough into a ball, flatten into a disk, and wrap tightly in plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least an hour.

Remove the dough from the refrigerator and let warm for a few minutes on the counter. Using your fingers, pull off 24 walnut-size pieces of dough. Flatten one piece into a disk, then press it into the bottom and up the sides of a muffin cup to form a crust. Try to keep the dough evenly thick. Repeat with the rest of the dough to line all 24 cups. Chill while you prepare the filling.

for the filling

Whisk the egg and corn syrup in a small mixing bowl or 2-cup glass measuring cup until thoroughly combined. Add the brown sugar, bourbon, melted butter, flour, salt and vanilla and whisk until smooth.

to assemble

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Place the muffin tins on a foil-lined half-sheet pan to catch drips. Divide the chocolate chips and chopped pecans evenly among the crust-lined muffin cups, a generous teaspoon of each per pie. Gently pour about 2 teaspoons of filling into each muffin cup to fill to the top. You may need to pour a little into each cup, let the liquid settle, then pour more to fill to the top. Bake, rotating pans halfway through, until the crusts are golden and the filling has puffed up and is set, 20 to 25 minutes. Set the muffin tin on a wire rack and let the pies cool for 5 minutes. Run a small, sharp knife around the edge of each pie and carefully transfer to the wire rack to cool. Serve slightly warm or at room temperature.

Cook's Note

Get even more flavor in your crust by using the fat left in the skillet after crisping the pancetta. Pour the rendered fat into a small heatproof bowl and chill. Measure the amount of fat and add

enough butter to total 8 tablespoons of combined rendered fat and butter. Add the pancetta fat to the food processor along with the cubed butter. You won't be sorry.

total time: 1 hour 10 minutes, plus chilling time

active prep: 45 minutes

serves: Makes about 24 mini pies

difficulty: medium