

## Flaky Lard and Butter Pastry

**Time:** About 30 minutes of active time, plus 3 20- to 30 minute periods of refrigeration to rest the dough between turns.

I remember my father exulting the flakiness of lard pastry years and years ago as he described the local restaurant's ethereal raisin pie he ate as a boy in Clay City, Indiana. Yet when I bought a block of Armour lard and made some dough, ethereal wasn't a word that leapt to mind. I didn't know much about baking, but I knew factory farming when I smelled it—even if I couldn't identify the odor. From then on when my shortening was white, it was Crisco, not lard.

Flash forward. Crisco is off the radar, for me anyway. The trans fats brouhaha took care of that. But lard, *leaf* lard—the kind that made up my dad's favorite raisin pie pastry—has regained ascendancy in culinary terms. Not only are its properties considered more wholesome than those of hydrogenated vegetable shortening, but leaf lard's performance in a pastry is unparalleled.

Those pasty, ultra-short, suede-like pie crusts? Leaf lard, which is the hard fat hiding around a pig's kidneys, produces pastry that is flaky, but not falling down drunk. Mix leaf lard and butter together and you get unparalleled flavor and performance in a pastry. Put some turns in the pastry in the tradition of semi-puff, and you'll be astounded, frankly, to be eating the best American pastry you've ever tasted.

## Equipment Mise en Place

For this recipe you will need a digital scale; a food processor; a rubber spatula; a bench knife; a rolling pin; and parchment paper.

## Ingredients

9.4 ounces (about 2 sifted cups) Anson Mills Fine Cloth-Bolted Pastry Flour, chilled

$\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon fine sea salt

Generous  $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon baking powder

4 tablespoons (2 ounces) frozen leaf lard, cut into half-inch pieces

8 tablespoons (4 ounces) unsalted European-style butter, cut into half-inch pieces and frozen for 30 minutes before beginning the crust

7 tablespoons (about 3.2 ounces by weight) ice water

## Baking Notes

Our fabulous leaf lard, which we ordered from Prairie Pride Farm in Minnesota, comes in a 4-pound pail, snowy white and ready to use. It keeps exceptionally well and makes really, really good fried chicken, too.

All the ingredients for this crust should be frozen first. Your flour is already frozen, of course, right? Because Anson Mills flour lives in the freezer. The lard will be frozen, too. Freeze the butter for a half hour before making the pastry.

## Directions

1. *Make the dough:* Place the flour, salt and baking powder in a food processor bowl and pulse to combine. Scatter the lard over the dry ingredients and process to a coarse meal, about 20 seconds. Stop the processor, scatter butter pieces over the top, and pulse the machine until the butter is partially cut into the dry ingredients, but still shows large pieces, 10 to 15 one-second pulses. Turn the contents of the processor into a large mixing bowl. Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients, add the ice water, and mix lightly with a rubber spatula until evenly moistened. Turn the mass out onto a clean counter. Use the heel of your hand and short, forward thrusts against the counter top to smear the cold butter chunks into the flour. This technique, known as *fraisage* will create layers of butter and flour, which serve to laminate and lift the dough. Scrape everything together with a bench knife and repeat the *fraisage*. Shape the dough into a rough 6- by 6-inch block. It will be crumbly and not inclined to hold together. Wrap it in plastic wrap and refrigerate 20 minutes.

2. *Put turns in the dough:* Sprinkle flour lightly over the counter. Unwrap the dough, sprinkle the top lightly with flour and roll it out into a rectangle 7-inches wide by 14-inches high. Fold the top third of the dough *down* and the bottom third of the dough *up* to create a rectangle, which, when turned with the open side on the right, looks like the pages of a book, and measures 5-inches wide by 7-inches high. Flour the counter very lightly and repeat the process. Use a bench knife to block the sides of the dough. You have completed two turns. Re-wrap the dough in plastic and refrigerate it at least 20 minutes. Repeat this process two more times. You have now given the dough 6 full turns. Refrigerate it for an hour or overnight; or wrap well and freeze. Refer to the specific recipe you're making for additional directions.

**Makes 8 individual 4 ¼-inch pies; 8 apple dumplings; 2 9-inch pies; or 1 double crust 10-inch pie**