

# National Pie Day

National Pie Day: Celebrate the Power of Pie

Pies. They're savory. They're sweet. They're sustenance and reward.

They can be the focal point of a feast, like the shepherd's pie I've made for years for my family's winter solstice celebration, or they can be the sweet reward you enjoy after you've savored a satisfying meal.

Pies are communal. They're sensual. And they hold a weighty significance in our country's history.

**In 1902, The New York Times deemed pie as "the American synonym of prosperity."**

(<https://priceconomics.com/how-apple-pie-became-american/>) And even Carl Sagan noted the significance of pie when he said: "If you wish to make an apple pie from scratch, you must first invent the universe."

In other words, pies have power.

## The History of Pie

Pies date back to the ancient Egyptians, and some of the first pies were made with reeds rather than crust for the sole purpose of holding the filling together. When the ingredients for the vessel changed to flour and water, not only were the first crusts inedible, but the contents generally consisted of meat, specifically fowl, and the legs were baked right in and used as handles, giving the name of these vessels - "coffyns" - a whole new meaning.

It would be another century before this quintessential dessert would turn sweet and become a staple and symbol of American life. The pie was introduced to Americans by Swedish and Dutch immigrants in the 17th century, and it wasn't until the late 18th century, after Pennsylvania Dutch women had perfected the process of preserving apples, that apple pie, in particular, became a mainstay in America's diet.

## Pies in Pop Culture

The popularity of pies extends beyond a general cultural symbol, though. Pies have managed to work their way into pop culture, as well, particularly into American TV and film. From the pie-in-the-face gesture - the trademark of slapstick comedy - to the "meat" pies in *Sweeney Todd*, the cherry pies in *Twin Peaks*, the apple pie in *American Pie*, the blueberry pie in *Stand By Me*, and the "chocolate" pie in *The Help*, these encrusted gastronomic works of art - and all their creative interpretations and uses - are front and center in both life and art in American culture.

Pies are sometimes imbued with backstory and narrative. In the movie, *Waitress*, pies are not only something Jenna is good at. They also become a device to echo the plot line: I Don't Want Earl's Baby Pie, Falling in Love Chocolate Mousse Pie, Earl Murders Me Because I'm Having an Affair Pie, and Naughty Pumpkin Pie.

Pies are sometimes used as a vehicle to do good in the world. In the iconic Pie Hole pie shop in the TV show, *Pushing Daisies*, Olive Snook, waitress and part-time delivery girl, recognizes the power of pie when she focuses all her love into each delicious pie she makes, believing that each of her customers will become infused with love and spread it around.

Sometimes pies can be mood altering. In *Men in Black 3*, as young Agent K tells Agent J, pies have the power to calm. Pie is his go-to solution when he needs to get out of his head. As he points out, "Pie don't work unless you let it."

And, sometimes, pies create connection. In *Labor Day*, in one of the most sensual pie making scenes you're likely to see in a movie, Frank shows Adele how to use up her too-ripe peaches, and they make a pie together. A true exemplar of the power of pie, the significance of this scene carries on through to the end of the film. (But you'll have to watch it to see why!)

### **Ways to Celebrate National Pie Day!**

Whether they're savory or sweet, pies are an undeniably sensual food. From the sugary-scented steam that puffs out the diagonal vents and the way your fork sinks into a perfect crust to the texture of the filling and the river of melting ice cream that trickles through the sticky nooks and crannies if you're going a la mode, pie beckons, it makes promises, and it always delivers.

Sweet or savory. Topless or bottomless. A la mode or humble. Pie is a well-deserved treat any time for any reason. Many restaurants across the U.S. offer free pie on January 23 to commemorate the creation, transformation, and persistent presence of pie, so be sure to check out the offerings in your town.

Celebrate by making one, and take young Agent K's advice. Let it work. In whatever way you want or need. If you're new to pie making, there are plenty of **pie making tips** (<http://www.piecouncil.org/Events/NationalPieDay/PieMakingTips>) out there to help you succeed: keeping your bowls and ingredients cold and not overworking the crust are the first steps to a delectable, flaky crust.

But if you're certain that pie making just isn't for you and you're just as certain that pie eating is, go out and find the best piece of pie you can, bring it home, and savor it bite by slow bite, alone or with someone you love. It's guaranteed to make you happy.