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How to Make the BEST Real Key Lime Pie!



If you want to make the best REAL Key Lime pie you've ever had, and remember being in the Keys when you had it last? This Key Lime pie is easy and tastes amazing. It is the genuine thing, not a pale-green, fake substitute! This is my grandmother's recipe, from the 1960's when she lived in the Florida Keys! She made the simple and tasty Meringue topping, which makes it extra good!

If you've never had a real Key Lime pie, you really have no idea what you are missing! And it doesn't matter if you're not a chef or have never made a pie before! Following these illustrated directions ANYONE can cook a perfect Key Lime pie for any occasion! It only takes 10 minutes to 20 minutes to make, 20 minutes in the oven, then cool in the fridge!

Bring back the memories of your Caribbean, Florida Keys, south Florida or Sea Base trip with a taste of this pie

Ingredients and Equipment (per 9 inch deep dish pie)

You'll notice that our pie recipe doubles the filling ingredients from most standard Key Lime Pie recipes. There's a simple reason for that: the usual pies are the skinny pathetic little things that are about half an inch thick. Everyone asks for more and says why is it so thin. This pie is a good healthy decent slice of pie. The filling is twice as thick and then the meringue is piled up on top! It looks beautiful, tastes great, and people get a healthy piece instead of a tiny pathetic sliver!



Pie filling

- 1 cup of [Nellie and Joe's real key lime juice](#) - you can get their distinctive yellow bottles at almost any grocery store, or [online here](#).
- 2 cans, 14oz each, of [sweetened condensed milk](#)
- 6 egg YOLKS only. Save the egg whites and set them aside for the topping..

Pie crust

- A 9 inch or 10 inch deep dish [graham cracker crust](#) is traditional.

Meringue topping

Native Florida Keys residents make Key Lime Pie with a meringue topping. Commercial bakeries, stores and restaurants skip it to cheap-out and make the pies smaller to freeze and easier to ship!

Don't cheap-out your pie!

- 6 egg whites per pie
- Sugar 8 tablespoons
- 1/2 teaspoon [cream of tartar](#) - this is vital to making the egg whites become fluffy and stiff.
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract



Step by step directions

Step 1 - Make the pie crust

Actually, first, you get the oven heating to 325 F and set the 6 eggs out to warm to room temperature.

Next, your pie crust options

1. BEST: [Fast and easy Graham Cracker / Nilla Crust - crackers](#) just set in place

- Shown at right, below. This has the flavor of the Graham Crackers with the lightness of the Nilla's (Vanilla crackers). AND it is super fast and easy, plus it less less fat and calories, because there is no added butter or sugar. All you do is arrange the crackers in the pie plate as shown. NOTHING else. Put crumbs in any gaps. It takes 3 to 5 minutes to do this.



2. [Graham Cracker / Nilla Crust blended crumbs](#)

- This has the flavor of the Graham Crackers with the lightness of the Nilla's (Vanilla crackers). It's a 50-50 blend of the two crackers, crushed. Add 1/4 cup melted butter (just enough to make the crumbs barely stick together) and press them with a large spoon into a greased 9" large, deep pie pan Directions: [lower-fat, lower sugar version of a graham cracker crust - it tastes the same with fewer calories](#)



3. Store-bought Graham Cracker Pie crust

- 9 inch or 10 inch pie graham cracker crust (grocery stores sell both disposable pie pans and glass pans. Get the deep dish type! These are not terrible... they're just usually not as good as the options above, which are also better-tasting, easier and cost less - and take only a few minutes to make.



If you'd rather make your own (they are MUCH better home made) then [see this page about how to make a graham cracker pie crust](#).

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4. Oat / Oatmeal pie crust

- Much as I love a Graham cracker pie crust, they are high in sugar and fat. So, a healthier option is Oats. It can be made sugar-free, gluten-free and even fat-free.
See this page for [how to make the Oat pie crust](#).

Step 2- Separate the egg yolks from the whites.

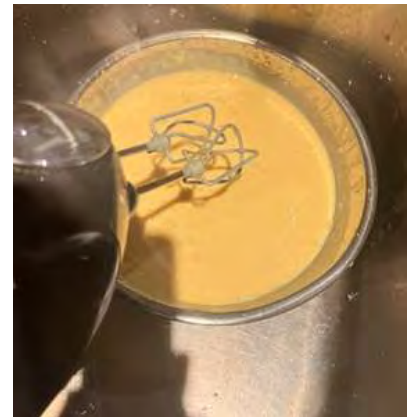
Just as it sounds keep them separate .
If you don't know how to separate egg whites, it is simple:
Crack them and let the whites slide through your fingers taking care not to break the yolk.
Yes, the photo shows more than 6 yolks; that day I was making many pies!



Step 3 - Combine yolks, lime juice and sweetened condensed milk

Combine them in a mixing bowl and blend well. I use a hand mixer on medium for several minutes.

Step 4 - Pour the mix into the pie plate
Pretty simple: just pour the mix into the pie plate on top of the crackers.
Fill it up to the top of the crust, about 1/8 to 1/4 below the top of the pie plate.



Step 5 - Start the pie baking

Put the pie in the oven (325 F) so it gets a 5 to at most 10 minute head start without the meringue so that the heat can penetrate. Meanwhile you want to make that meringue topping right away without delay.



Step 6 - Make the meringue topping

It's really easy. In a plastic or glass bowl, not metal, it can contaminate them, get your mixer or whisk going on a pretty high speed.

Gather:

- 4 to 6 egg whites per pie (4 is enough, but more piles it higher!)
- Sugar 6 to 8 tablespoons
- 1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract



Add a few tablespoons of sugar at a time and sprinkle the cream of tartar into it. As it starts to thicken just keep adding a couple more tablespoons of sugar, then the vanilla extract, and mixing again and again until you get frothy white peaks after using the half cup of sugar into the six egg whites.

Step 7 - Smooth the meringue over the pie

Remove the pie from the oven, without burning yourself of course, then gently and evenly, starting Around the outside edge of the pie slowly pour or scoop the meringue topping onto the pie filling in the pie gently smooth it out and then with the edge of your spatula make little waves or peaks across the top of the pie.

The top pie has no topping,
The bottom 2 have a Meringue topping



Step 8 - Put the pie back in the oven!

Finish baking the pie at 350 F for 10 - 15 minutes, until the Meringue has golden brown peaks and white troughs!

The reason it takes so little time to bake this pie is the unusual chemistry of a Key Lime Pie. The proteins in the egg yolks react with the sweetness in the condensed



milk and the acidity in the lime juice, causing them to gel up or set without extreme heat. This is why only the sweetened condensed milk works because in addition to the sweetness it has extra thickness that helps thicken the pie. In other words regular whipping cream or other milk will not substitute for sweetened condensed milk or dulce de leche which is the same thing.

Step 9 - Remove the pie set

Ste the pie on the stove top (with the heat off of course) and allow it to cool to room temperature. After about 30 minutes, pop it into a cold fridge. When it is good and chilled about two or three hours later it's ready to eat . It will keep in a cold fridge for at least a week after that or you can freeze it.



Costs

- The real key lime juice, lime "Nellie and Joe's" is only about \$4 for a PINT BOTTLE, which makes 2 pies.
- Graham Crackers and Nillas are relatively inexpensive, as is the tiny amount of sugar needed.
- Sweetened condensed milk is about \$2 to \$3 per can, meaning about \$5 per pie

1 large pie costs about \$8 and is twice the size of those bland \$30 pies in the stores.