

# KITCHEN NOTEBOOK

SOME PEOPLE FIND THE SAYING "EASY AS PIE" UTTERLY MYSTIFYING, BUT A BASIC PASTRY DOUGH IS NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF ... IF YOU SUFFER FROM F.O.F. (FEAR OF FLOUR), FOLLOW OUR LEAD, AND YOU WILL BE REWARDED WITH A CRUST THAT IS ENORMOUSLY VERSATILE



## PERFECT PIECRUST

Peach. Blueberry. Raspberry. August isn't August without pie. We've given you a slew of recipes (page 82) that can all be made using the same pie dough. Here are a few tips that will give you a perfect crust every time. (1) Measure correctly! We can't stress this enough. Spoon the flour (instead of scooping it) into a dry-measuring cup, not a liquid-measuring cup. (2) Let it mound slightly on top, then level it off with the straight edge of a knife. Don't rap the cup on the counter to level the flour, because that will compact it, increasing the amount of flour the cup will hold. (3) Use a pastry blender or your fingertips to cut the (cold) fats into the dry ingredients. The mixture

should resemble coarse meal with pea-size lumps of butter. If this step takes longer than you had expected, pop the bowl into the freezer for a few minutes to chill. You chill, too: It's only a pie, for Pete's sake. (4) After stirring in the ice water very gradually, gently squeeze the dough to see if it holds together without crumbling. (5) We like to incorporate a final, energetic blending of the ingredients using a French technique called *fraisage*; this helps distribute the fat more evenly and gives the dough just enough structure to prevent it from tearing or cracking while being rolled or lifted. Using the heel of your hand, smear small portions of the crumbly mixture

in one or two quick, short, forward motions. (6) Then gather all the portions of dough together with a pastry scraper or putty knife and form the mass into a hamburger-shaped disk. It should be malleable; feel free to manhandle it a little, massaging it so that any cracks disappear, but don't overwork it or the crust will be tough. (7) After the dough is chilled—to let the gluten relax and the fats firm up—roll out the dough. (8) To transfer the dough to the pan, partially roll it up onto the rolling pin, lifting it off the work surface. Unroll the dough over the pan (move the rolling pin away from you) and gently press it into the crease of the pan. —Jane Daniels Lear