



GF Friendly

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Shortcrust Pastry

Tasty pastry – **GLUTEN-FREE** or wheat lovers

I detailed the **Gluten-Free method** for this popular pastry in Healthy Living HL15, but in hindsight figured it might be hard to follow. So, here is the step-by-step illustrated version. Don't expect to slap it up in five minutes because it needs care and is a bit time-consuming; but if you're a coeliac and are hanging out for that yummy taste you remember from the time when you could have a **real** pie, this is the answer. Do yourself and your family a favour and try it. And you die-hard wheat-lovers might like to give it a go too – see how the other half lives and get a surprise into the bargain! Quantities of the ingredients are for a pie in a 23cm (9 inch) dish with bottom and top, so if you only want a pastry topping, reduce the amounts by half; **for GF keep the egg and oil the same.**

Basic Ingredients:

Pre-prepared pie filling **NOTE:** For a sweet filling add:
250g plain flour 1 Tbsp sugar
50g self-raising flour
70g margarine
Skim milk
Salt (optional)

GF-ONLY additions:

1 egg
1 tsp light-tasting olive oil

**Method:**

Mix the dry ingredients in a bowl and rub in the margarine with fingers to achieve as close to a fine-breadcrumb consistency as possible. This is easier using less fat, but it will produce a pastry that isn't as short and ends up rubbery. Make a well in the centre. **WITH WHEAT FLOUR**, just add milk and mix in a bit at a time with a knife until the dough clings together – neither dry nor sticky! **FOR GF:** Beat the egg and olive oil together. Pour this in and combine well with a fork. Add milk a little at a time while mixing until the dough binds together and doesn't feel either dry or crumbly. **For both** - form by hand into a single lump, then break into two, one part a little larger for the base. Squeeze both gently into balls. **GF:** rest the two balls in the fridge for five minutes.

With the wheat version, dust the board with plain flour and roll the dough to fit the dish, the larger piece for the base. Take up each carefully around the rolling pin to transfer to the dish.

GF: Tear off a sheet of baking paper slightly bigger than the diameter of the pie dish. **Do Not dust for rolling!** Flatten the larger ball in the centre of the paper with the palm, then begin rolling. **Take it slowly** to avoid dragging up the pastry, wiping the rolling pin with a hand or paper kitchen towel when necessary. **OR** place another sheet of paper on top and roll the dough between the two. Pause occasionally to pat in the sides and eliminate cracks on the edges. Remember – not too fast; and avoid applying too much pressure. Turn it over a couple of times if you wish, but do it carefully, rolling until big enough to fit in the dish up to the top edge.



Now, take off the top paper and, holding the sheet underneath, transfer the pastry to the dish. Leave the paper on and gently push down with the fingers to sit firmly against the edge. Trim paper, leaving an inch or two overhanging.



Shortcrust Pastry GF method continued:

Roll out the pastry TOP as before to a size with sufficient extra that can be sealed to the edge of the base. Slide this onto a thin plastic cutting sheet or similar, remove the paper covering (if used) and rest in the fridge for five minutes – this makes for easier handling later. Now pour the pie filling onto the base in the dish.



Take the pastry top from the fridge and leave it on the cutting sheet (in picture left, this is the yellow one). Place a clean sheet of baking paper on the pastry, but don't press down – it will need to be free enough to slide out from under. Gently lower another plastic cutting sheet to cover the lot (red in the pic). Before transferring, brush the top edge of the pie pastry **BASE** with water.

With one hand supporting the under-sheet, place the other hand on top and turn them over (you can see that the yellow sheet is now uppermost). Take this "sandwich" to the pie and rest it on the dish. Remove the top cutting sheet (yellow) and adjust so that the pastry top sits centrally over the pie and covers the edge of the base. Holding the far edges of both pieces of paper, slide out the supporting cutting sheet (red).



Before going further, make sure the top is in the right position because re-adjustment after this stage can cause the pastry to crack.



While gripping the top paper, carefully slide out the lower sheet so that the pastry now sits directly on the filling. Gently peel off the covering paper and crimp down the pastry top around the edge, sealing it to the base.



Finally, make a few holes through the top with a knife to allow steam to escape, then brush with water, milk or egg white to glaze.

Oven temperature will depend on the filling, but ideally should be around 180°C fan-forced (200°C conventional). Bake until golden (approximately 35 minutes).

Surprising though it may seem, pre-baked shortcrust pastry freezes well. In fact, the uncooked dough-ball itself can be frozen by wrapping in plastic food wrap to exclude air, then sealing in a freezer bag. It can also be kept in the main section of the fridge for a few days like this.

The picture at the top was a **Steak and Kidney pie** – recipe coming soon.

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