

## Savory Pot Pie

September 23 is celebrated as National Great American Pot Pie Day. Chicken pot pie is an all-American comfort food. The most iconic version of it originated in Lancaster, in Pennsylvania Dutch country, but was brought to the United States by European settlers and had its roots in English dishes made from leftovers. Chicken pot pie began as a recipe used to stretch the week's leftover meat, and adding thick square noodles to the mix of broth, potatoes, vegetables, and chicken.

However, this classic comfort food has an even longer history and its evolution from where it started to where it is today is fascinating. Historically, the first evidence of a pie-like galette made for pharaohs of Egypt can be found etched on tomb walls in the Valley of the Kings. The royal bakers added fruits on top of a flat crust that was made with grains such as ground oats, rye, barley, or wheat and baked over hot coals. After this, the Greeks created a similar dish but added meats. It is believed that evolved into the Romans making a decadent galette filled with seafood and meats, but throwing away the crust instead of eating it. Part of the reason the crust was likely discarded was that it was as hard as a rock due to being made from mostly flour and oil. The Roman's crust was more like a disposable baking dish.

As the meat pies made their way around the world, thanks to immigrants and the crusaders, it is believed that the crust underwent a transition and improved in Northern Europe. There, farmers grew wheat and raised livestock such as sheep, swine, and cattle. Instead of using olive oil, they were able to combine the wheat flour with butter or lard, which resulted in a softer, more edible crust. With this change, the more traditional meat pie was introduced.

Interestingly enough, the meat-filled pastries of that time were not called pies. They were called coffins because they were filled with meat. Royalty even cooked songbirds and used them to decorate the top of the pastry coffin to identify the filling inside. The nursery rhyme "four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie" probably refers to this practice and royal cuisine.

During the Renaissance, pastries and other foods became a form of art. Using flour, fats, and water, the bakers formed the dough into the shape of birds, flowers, fish, and other objects which were then coated with an egg wash, saffron, and sometimes even gold flakes.

Later, during the Industrial Revolution, baking molds for meat pies were part of meals for the rich and the poor. However, the type of filling in the pie differed based on socioeconomic status. If a family was poor or working class, they ate mutton from old sheep and beef from dairy cows. Families from the higher classes who owned land and hunting rights were able to eat pies made from fresh game and fish. The wealthiest, high-class people ate their pies made from pigeons specifically raised to provide meat to the rich during the winter.

Fast forward past the two World Wars, which changed the meal time experience for many American families because most mothers went from being full time homemakers to working in assembly lines at factories. Meals needed to be quick and easy to prepare. In 1951, the Swanson company started to produce chicken pot pies that were sold in the frozen food section in grocery stores across America.

Today, pot pies are a convenience food that can be found as a small, basic frozen microwaveable meal or full-size pies with fresh vegetables and hearty pieces of meat, either made fresh at the store or found in the freezer section. While freshly made pot pies do require more time and effort in the kitchen, I challenge you to make one with your own ingredients and enjoy the freshness of flavor, and soft, flaky pastry crust.

Try this recipe from Taste of Home at <https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/favorite-chicken-potpie/>

### **Favorite Chicken Potpie**

**TOTAL TIME:** Prep: 40 min. Bake: 35 min. + standing

**YIELD:** 2 pot pies (8 servings each).

#### **Ingredients:**

- 2 cups diced peeled potatoes
- 1 3/4 cups sliced carrots
- 1 cup butter, cubed
- 2/3 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 3/4 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 3/4 teaspoon pepper
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 1 1/2 cups whole milk
- 4 cups cubed cooked chicken
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 1 cup frozen corn
- 4 sheets refrigerated pie crust

#### **Directions:**

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F.
2. Place potatoes and carrots in a large saucepan; add water to cover. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cook, covered, 8-10 minutes or until crisp-tender; drain.
2. In a large skillet, heat butter over medium-high heat. Add onion; cook and stir until tender. Stir in flour and seasonings until blended; cook for at least 1 minute. Gradually stir in broth and milk. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly; cook and stir 2 minutes or until thickened. Stir in chicken, peas, corn, and potato mixture; remove from heat.
3. Unroll a pie crust into each of two 9-in. pie plates; trim even with rims. Add chicken mixture. Unroll remaining crusts; place centered over the filling. Trim, seal, and flute the crust edges. Cut slits in tops of crust.

4. Bake 35-40 minutes or until crust is lightly browned. Let stand 15 minutes before cutting.

**Freeze option:** Cover and freeze unbaked pies. To use, remove from freezer 30 minutes before baking (do not thaw). Preheat the oven to 425°F. Place pies on baking sheets; cover edges loosely with foil. Bake 30 minutes. Reduce oven setting to 350°F; bake 70-80 minutes longer or until crust is golden brown and a thermometer inserted in center reads 165°F.

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Sources:

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