

From 'Pompkin Pudding' to Pumpkin Pie

EARLY SETTLERS TOOK AN ENGLISH PUDDING, ADDED A DELICIOUS AND VERSATILE NATIVE INGREDIENT, AND GAVE US A TRADITION WE STILL ENJOY

By Lavada Nahon
Van Cortlandt Manor Food Historian

The first "receipt" (the historic term for "recipe") for what we now call pumpkin pie, first appear in American Cookery, by Amelia Simmons in 1796. In the second edition, which also appeared in 1796, Amelia has two versions of "pompkin pudding": No.1 is closest to what we eat today; No.2 used molasses and allspice, creating a darker, richer pie. Specific measurements were given for the pumpkin, milk, and eggs, but not for the sugar, molasses, and spices.

Sugar, molasses, and spices were expensive, and varied in quantity in most kitchens because of their cost, but also based on what was at hand. The major taste difference however comes not in quantity, but in what was used. Nutmeg is the spice of the day. Mace, the outer membrane that covers the nutmeg shell, has a darker, richer nutmeg taste. Ginger heightens both. Cinnamon has come to replace these spices in modern adaptations. But in Amelia's receipt it is not listed. It is not an omission; it is a mark of the spice blend used during the Colonial and Early New Nation periods. Grinding the spices right before they are used will also heighten the period taste.



Receipts for Pompkin Pudding

No.1 One quart stewed and strained pompkin, 3 pints milk, 6 beaten eggs, sugar, mace, nutmeg, and ginger, laid in to paste and baked in dishes three quarters of an hour.

No. 2. One quart of milk, 1 pint pumpkin, 4 eggs, molasses, allspice, and ginger in a crust, make 1 hour.

Pumpkin Pie

Adapted from pumpkin pudding receipt No. 1, American Cookery, Amelia Simmons, 1796

- 2 - 15oz. cans solid pumpkin
- 4 cups milk
- 6 eggs, beaten
- 1 ½ cups to 2 cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground mace
- 2-3 teaspoons ground nutmeg
- 2-3 teaspoons ground ginger

Preheat oven to 375 °F. Line two 9-inch deep-dish pie pans with pie pastry, set aside. In a large mixing bowl using a wooden spoon, work pumpkin and cream together, stir in eggs, sugar and spices. Pour into pans. Run spoon over top to release any air bubbles. Bake for 1 to 1 ½ hours, or until crust is golden brown, and pumpkin mixture looks solid. To test for doneness, insert a metal knife into the center of the pie, it should come out clean. Cool pies 2 hours before cutting. Recipe can be cut in half to make one 9-inch pie.