

A Dish to Die For

Book 12 of the Key West Food Critic Mysteries

Recipe

Banana Cream Pie

One of the plot strands in this book has to do with the Woman's Club in Key West, which is a gorgeous old home on Duval Street. I took a tour of the building this spring, and was the happy recipient of the 1988 version of their cookbook. I had also found an earlier edition of the book on eBay, that had been published in 1949. Oh my, the recipes and stories in those cookbooks had my mind racing with possibilities! This banana cream pie was served to Hayley and Martha Hubbard, while they are probing a suspect. I chose to make a graham cracker crust rather than, but any crust is fine. The recipe is based on the version in the 1988 cookbook.

Ingredients

For the crust:

- One package graham crackers (nine sheets)
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 4 tablespoons butter

For the pie:

- 2 ripe bananas
- 2 cups whole milk
- 3 eggs, room temperature, separated
- 4 tablespoons sugar
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- pinch of salt
- 2 teaspoons water
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

For the meringue:

- 3 egg whites (see above)
- 1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
- 2 teaspoons sugar

Preheat the oven to 350.

To make the crust, smash or whirl the crackers to crumbs. Melt the butter. Stir the butter and sugar into the crumbs and press this mixture into the bottom and sides of a 10-inch pie pan. Bake for ten minutes and let that cool.

For the pudding, separate the eggs and set the whites aside. Beat the yolks until thick and smooth with the sugar, cornstarch, salt, and cold water. Heat the milk until it's about to boil, then stir it slowly into the egg mixture. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until the pudding thickens (about five minutes.) Let that cool a bit and then mix in the vanilla and butter.

Slice the bananas into the pie crust. Spread the pudding on top of the bananas.

Beat the egg whites in a clean bowl with the cream of tartar until soft peaks appear. Continue beating while slowly adding the sugar until peaks are stiff and glossy—about 5 minutes.

Mound the meringue onto the pudding, arranging it into peaks.

Bake at 350 for 10-15 minutes until the meringue begins to brown. Refrigerate the pie for three hours before serving.