Almond-Pear Pie
HANDS-ON TIME: 1 hour TOTAL TIME: 3 hours, 26 minutes
3 tablespoons butter, softened
1 cup plus 3 tablespoons sugar, divided
3 eggs, divided
1 1/2 tablespoons heavy cream
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons cornmeal
1 (750-milliliter) bottle red wine
1 (3-inch) cinnamon stick
1 star anise
3 whole cloves
1 (1-inch) slice fresh ginger
3 Bosc pears, peeled, cored, and halved
3 tablespoons cornstarch
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 3/4 cups half-and-half
2 egg yolks
1 teaspoon almond extract
1 tablespoon butter
Garnish: rosemary sprig
1. Beat butter and 3 tablespoons sugar at medium speed with an electric mixer until creamy. Add 1 egg, cream, and vanilla; beat just until blended. Gradually add flour and cornmeal; beat just until dough comes together. Shape dough into a ball, cover with plastic wrap, and chill at least 1 hour.
2. Combine 1/4 cup sugar, wine, and next 4 ingredients in a Dutch oven; add pears. Stir in enough water to cover (about 3 1/4 cups). Bring mixture to a simmer over medium heat. Simmer 20 minutes or just until pears are almost tender; drain, discarding poaching liquid. Let cool completely. Slice pears into about 1/2-inch slices. Set aside.
3. Roll dough into an 11-inch circle on a lightly floured surface. Fit into a 9-inch pie plate; fold edges under and crimp. Line pastry with aluminum foil, and fill with pie weights or dried beans. Bake at 375° for 15 to 20 minutes or until crust is lightly browned. Remove pie weights and foil, and let cool completely.
4. Combine cornstarch, salt, and remaining 1/4 cup sugar in a medium saucepan; whisk in half-and-half. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, just until hot. Remove pan from heat. Whisk together egg yolks and remaining 2 eggs in a medium bowl. Gradually whisk egg mixture into hot half-and-half mixture. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, until mixture is thickened and bubbly. Remove from heat; whisk in almond extract and 1 tablespoon butter. Let cool 10 minutes.
5. Pour filling into crust, spreading to edges of crust with a spatula. Arrange pear slices over top of filling, and chill at least 1 hour or until set. Garnish, if desired. Makes 8 servings.
Recipe by Kelly Kleisner
The Macintosh, Charleston, South Carolina

Pumpkin Swirl Pie with Gingersnap Crust
HANDS-ON TIME: 25 minutes TOTAL TIME: 3 hours
28 gingersnap cookies
1/4 cup pecan halves, toasted
3 tablespoons butter, melted
2 tablespoons brown sugar
1 (3-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar, divided
2 large eggs, divided
1 1/4 cups canned pumpkin
1 cup half-and-half
3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
Dash of ground cloves
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1. Preheat oven to 325°. Process gingersnaps in a food processor 30 seconds or until mixture resembles fine crumbs. Add pecans; pulse until finely chopped. Add butter and brown sugar; pulse until blended.
2. Press crumb mixture into a 9-inch pie plate. Bake 10 minutes. Remove from oven, and cool completely on a wire rack.
3. Beat cream cheese and 2 tablespoons granulated sugar with an electric mixer at medium speed until smooth. Whisk 1 egg; add 1 tablespoon whisked egg to cream cheese mixture; beat with electric mixer until blended.
4. Whisk together remaining whole egg, remaining 1/2 cup granulated sugar, pumpkin, and next 6 ingredients in a large bowl; pour into cooled crust. Drop cream cheese mixture by heaping tablespoonfuls over pumpkin fillings gently swirl with a knife. Bake at 325° for 45 to 50 minutes or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean. Remove from oven, and let cool on a wire rack. Serve at room temperature or chilled. Makes 8 servings.
Recipe by Kathleen Royal Phillips