



WELL SEASONED

BY SUZANNE PODHAIZER



Non-Traditional Tourtière

I love many things about a classic tourtière, including the mix of meat and warming spices, and crisp crust. However, I punched up my filling with extra spice and tweaked cooking techniques to build flavor.

This makes one 9-inch pie, which is wonderful baked in a cast-iron skillet or a regular pie pan.

Plan to make the dough and filling a few hours in advance, as the filling must be cold when added to the shell.

CRUST:

A double-crust pie dough of your choice. I prefer an all-butter crust, but I've used homemade lard with great results. When you divide up the pie dough to let it rest, you'll want one of the dough balls to weigh around 2 ounces more than the other. The heavier piece of dough will be your bottom crust, and the lighter one, your top crust.

SPICE BLEND:

Mix this up before starting to make the filling

1 teaspoon ground allspice

1 teaspoon mustard seed

1 teaspoon celery seed

1 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg. A fine microplane grater works beautifully for this.

Up to 1 teaspoon mild or medium-hot chili flake. I like Aleppo pepper, which is fruity, earthy, and less spicy than standard chili flake. I use the full amount.



$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, about 60 grinds with my pepper mill (whew). I ground it into a little dish and measured it with a spoon.

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground clove

Whisk the spices in a small bowl.

SAUCE:

1 quart beef, pork, or chicken stock

1 tablespoon cider vinegar

1 teaspoon medium-coarse plain or smoked salt

3 bay leaves

$\frac{3}{4}$ pound golden potatoes, in $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch cubes

Put the stock, vinegar, salt, and bay leaves in a saucepan, bring to a simmer, and reduce to approximately 2 cups. When reduced, add the potato cubes, and simmer for 10 minutes. Turn off the heat.

THE North Star MONTHLY

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MEAT:

1 pound ground pork
1 pound ground pastured beef (or rose veal from a farmer you trust to treat the animals well)
1 teaspoon medium-coarse plain or smoked salt

As soon as you've put the stock on to simmer, combine the meats and salt in a bowl, and mix until thoroughly combined. Heat an 11-ish inch, heavy skillet over medium-high heat until it's quite hot. Press the meat mixture into the pan in one layer covering the bottom, as though you're making a big meat cookie. Let sizzle until rich brown on the underside. Turn off the heat but leave the pan on the burner, and turn and stir the meat to break up clumps; it doesn't have to be perfect, and it won't be cooked all the way through. Put the contents of the pan into a mixing bowl, and let cool while you complete the next steps.

FILLING:

1 teaspoon olive oil
1 pound onions, approximately two medium, diced
Your spice mix
The stock and potatoes



The juices from the cooked meat
 ¼ pound celery, diced
 1 ounce garlic, around four medium cloves, grated on a microplane

Wash the pan you used for the meat, and reuse for onions. Heat the pan over medium heat, add the olive oil, and when it thins out, add the onions. Cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and lightly browned. Add the spice mix and cook, stirring constantly, until the spices smell fragrant and toasty, another minute or two. Pour in the stock and potatoes, and add any juices that have collected in the bowl of meat as it cooled. Add the celery and garlic, and simmer until the juices have turned into a glaze, such that when you drag your stirring implement across the bottom of the pan, it leaves an empty place behind it. Remove from heat, and let cool for 10 minutes. Discard the bay leaves. Add the meat mixture to the pan, and stir to combine all of the ingredients. Scoop the filling into the meat's resting bowl, cover, and place in the fridge until cold. If you're in a hurry, spread the filling onto a cookie sheet, and put that in the fridge.



ASSEMBLY:

1 egg, whisked

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Roll out the bottom pie crust and place it in your cast-iron pan. Add the cold filling. Paint the edge with a bit of whisked egg to help the two crusts adhere to each other. Lay on the top crust. Trim the edge (I used a pair of clean scissors), crimp with a fork or your fingers, and brush the crust with egg. Using a sharp paring knife, cut a few steam vents in the top crust.

Place the pie pan on a baking sheet in case the juices bubble over, and cook for 25 minutes. Rotate the baking sheet 180-degrees and cook until the pie is golden brown on top, another 15-30 minutes, depending on your oven. Let cool for at least 30 minutes before cutting, unless you're super hungry, in which case, who cares!



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