



Atlantic Beach Pie Bars

July 13, 2023

This recipe is based on Bill Smith's recipe for Atlantic Beach Pie. I've changed the measurements and the baking pan but kept his ratios the same. Bake the day before you want to serve it and keep refrigerated until just before serving. Bill Smith's Atlantic Beach Pie is the re-named, modern version of Lemon Pie which is a classic summer dessert served in eastern North Carolina and beyond. Bill does not claim to have created the pie, but he certainly popularized it, and I personally think he improved it. The genius of Bill Smith's Atlantic Beach Pie is the buttery saltine-cracker crust and the real whipped cream on top.

Makes a 12 bars, or an 8-inch square

Ingredients:

FOR THE CRUST:

- 2 sleeves saltine (with salt) crackers, unopened
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- 1½-2 sticks unsalted butter, room temperature to very soft

FOR THE FILLING:

- 4 large egg yolks
- 1 (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
- ½ cup lemon or lime juice, a mix of the two, or key lime juice
- Pinch of kosher salt
- Fresh whipped cream for garnish

Method:

Pre-heat oven to 350°F

Make the crust:

1. Using a rolling pin, crush the crackers in their sleeves. Or using your hands, crush the crackers finely. (Stop before all the crackers turn to dust; you want to have some little pieces—the bigger size pieces add a nice texture to the crust.)
2. Add cracker crumbs to a bowl and add sugar; stir to combine.
3. Add the softened butter and work through all the crumbs with your hands. I wear a kitchen glove and smush the butter and crackers together breaking up any pieces that I think are too big.



4. Work the butter in with your hands until the crumbs hold together. If the crust is too crumbly, add the other ½ stick of softened butter.
5. Press into and up the sides of an 8-inch square pan or a 9-inch pie pan.
6. Freeze for 15-20 minutes, then bake for 16-18 minutes or until the crust gets a little color.
7. The crust doesn't need to be cold before filling it. I let it cool for 10 minutes.

Make the filling:

8. In a medium bowl, whisk egg yolks into condensed milk, then whisk in the lemon or lime juice (or both), and salt, making sure to combine them completely.
9. Pour into the shell, and bake for 16-18 minutes until the filling has set—I baked for 18 minutes and it was perfect.
10. Let it slowly cool to room temperature and refrigerate until completely cold, 6 hours or overnight. At this point, it can also be frozen if you aren't serving it immediately.
11. Serve with a generous dollop of fresh whipped cream.

Note: I use an 8-inch square tin that comes with a lid for easy baking and easy transport.