

This past Saturday was "Pi Day." With our strange American method of writing dates, it was 3/14, therefore, Pi (3.14) Day. Month/Day/Year doesn't make a lot of sense, but we are stuck with it. It is worth noting that one must be careful when ascertaining the dates of documents or letters from countries where the more logical Day/Month/Year notation is used.

But, Pi Day it was here, in any case. That started me thinking not only about Pi, but about pie. Since most pie plates are round--though rectangular and square pies are not unknown--Pi can be easily used to determine the area of a pie.

We were a family of five--my brother and sister and I, our mother and our father. So, when our mother baked pie, as she often did, she cut the pie into five pieces. Using Pi and basic math we all learned in school, we could have determined exactly the number of square inches of pie that should be on each plate. In reality, she may have cut the pie in sizes to match each one's needs and capacity for eating pie, but usually, I remember, the pieces looked nearly identical.

Standard pie plate sizes are eight inch, nine inch, and ten inch. Our mother had nine inch plates. The numbers referred to the diameter of the plates. So, using that old formula that most of us have engraved on our memories, we could compute: Pi (3.14) times the radius of the pie plate squared equals the number of square inches in the pie. So, $3.14 \times (4.5)^2 = 63.6$. If we divide that into five pieces, each of us should have had 12.7 square inches of pie!

My favorite pie is blackberry, but I seldom make one anymore, since we haven't had a good wild blackberry patch in the woods for years. Next favorite, I think, is probably mince, but most people don't seem to like mincemeat pie, so I seldom have that, either.

The old standards are always good--apple, cherry, and blueberry. I only like some pumpkin pies, though. I don't like the ones that are called "chiffon," that are light and fluffy. I like pumpkin pie with lots of pumpkin--a dark orange pie with substance. That pie is good breakfast food, I think. It goes beyond "dessert."

There are many ways of making pie crust. Most people have the

"best" method, though opinions of what is "best" differ radically. There are those who make pie crust with oil, others who use butter, some who add an egg, vinegar, milk, or cream cheese. There may be various versions and combinations of these ingredients, depending on who is doing the baking.

My personal "best" is pretty simple: flour, salt, lard, and water--the old traditional recipe. But, my favorite part of the pie crust made this way isn't even in the pie. When I have rolled out my crust, I re-roll the trimmings, lay the roughly rectangular result on a cookie sheet, dot it very generously with butter, strew sugar and cinnamon on top, and bake it in a hot oven until crisp and golden.

There are other kinds of pie than those relegated to dessert, though. I often make "veggie pies," that are, I suppose, somewhat like a quiche. I don't use a recipe, though, and the ingredients depend on what I have on hand. Usually, I make a whole wheat/butter crust, then make a filling of cream, grated cheese, beaten eggs, and some combination of chopped broccoli, potatoes, onions, garlic, peppers, spinach, carrots, etc. These are "main dish" pies for us.

Then, there are my favorite childhood pies. These are quite simple to make and depend more on weather than anything else. Find a good mud puddle, scoop up the dirt from the edges, form it into nice, flat patties, and only pretend to eat the mud pies.

Other pies were also good for play when we were young. Cow pies provided quite a lot of entertainment. One of our favorite games as we went through the pasture to bring home the cows for evening milking often involved cow pies. I would close my eyes, and my sister would lead me through the pasture. She would try to direct my steps into fresh cow manure. She might also attempt to lead me through a thistle patch or into a willow swamp. Sometimes, I would lead, and she would be the victim. The "lead-ee" would have to use other powers of perception to avoid these hazards. It was seldom successful.

Next year, though, when Pi Day arrives, I think we should all celebrate by baking and consuming delicious pies. For the next Pi Day will be very special. 3/14/16 becomes 3.1416. The next two digits of Pi

will be revealed. I think we will have a Pi pie party.