

Sweet-berry Pie

by
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Early one fall afternoon, on her way home from the village market, a grandmother stopped by the house of her two children- a son and a daughter. She couldn't stay, but offered a fresh collection of garden berries, flour, sugar and almost all of the other makings for a fine pie (less the labor, time and talent).

"I thought you might like to make a pie for the children." she said gently to her son.

The son kissed Granny on the cheek, thanked her, closed the door and took the ingredients into the kitchen to mix with some of his own. The Granny then made her way home (that the son had arranged for her), while he went to work preparing the spiced fruit medley, mixing the dough, and constructing the pie with careful attention- and a particular finesse. "Oh what a grand pie this shall be!" he thought to himself.

The daughter to the grandmother, in the meanwhile, tended to her two children that were in the back room with their father, enjoying the familial fruits, and innate sense of security of being a well-established and cozy little family.

In another room, on another side of the house, alone, waited the children of the grandmother's son- who was still busy in the kitchen preparing the pie and doggedly considering all of the many variables and factors that would have to come together to make a pie as full and sumptuous as he was firmly envisioning for all to enjoy.

During this time consuming pie consideration, then preparation/construction/management, the father stopped to stick his head in the door of the room where his children waited, and said with a grin, "This is a fine pie I'm making kids. Just you wait- when it's done, you'll each get a nice big, juicy quarter of it- as will your two cousins in the other room. And make sure to thank your granny when you see her next." He continued with an upwardly pointed finger, "Now go wash your hands and I'll get back to the kitchen." Soon those kids will understand why I worked so hard, he thought with a satisfied smile of a major accomplishment.

Finally, the pie was made, brushed with sweet cinnamon butter and set to bake in the already warm oven. The grandmother's son then began to clean the kitchen, still by himself. Consideration, to slow-bake, to clean-up, the man had done it all.

Soon, a thick, rich fragrance filled the tiny house as the flavors co-mingled in the oven's heat under a woven blanket of golden-crusting goodness. All knew that a fantastic pie had been made that day- and soon it would be cut- and the four grandchildren concerned would each receive an equal slice as promised. Hooray, it's sweet-berry pie day! In their hearts, they all realized the love and effort that had been expended that long Autumn day.

Then, and quite unexpectedly, the father, the grandmother's son, the man in-charge, the man who took full responsibility for the creation of the whole pie and it's day-long prep/maintenance, the very man who had used his best judgment and had made all of the right-timed and meticulous steps that it took to foster this fantastic golden pie from raw ingredients into a very fragrant, ready-pregnant, near-perfect, right spiced pastry MADE FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF ALL, began to feel seriously queasy.

He stuck his head in the room where his children were and talked with his son for a bit- just above a whisper.

Then, holding his belly, he turned to stumble out of the house and into the slight chill of the early evening air. The son, the father, the brother, the faulted yet brilliant man who'd made the pie, teetered one foot after a wobbly second, to just inside the tree-line. He stopped, leaning against a tree, at the edge of the deep forest closely fronting the small second-generation home. Loosing his dependence on the tree, he fell into a deep blanket of maple leaves, bits of light underbrush and unconsciousness.

He died alone there, that night, of what turned out to be a rapid and greedy cancer. A quite rapid and very greedy cancer indeed, one that proved even more powerful than his pride.

Getting anxious, the daughter, mother, aunt, sister of the man, went looking for him (and very naturally, the pie)- once she realized he wasn't in the kitchen. Out the door she soon ventured.

Once the body was discovered by the daughter of the grandmother, she threw some maple leaves on the body of her brother, backed into the cottage, quietly closed the door to the woods, turned into the kitchen and popped open the old iron oven door. There she stared, bent over in the berry fused vapor- wild, stary-eyed with amazement at what she was facing- and though she knew that the pie was for ALL the children, she couldn't help but to be overtaken with a (very natural, if base) lusting for that glorious pie of pies. Quickly, she plotted a simple and deceptive scheme fueled by greed (based on fear), not at all unlike that of a cancer metastasizing at some unknown cellular stimulus believed to be an attack.

“Kids!”, she shot and signaled through the open door to the room where her family waited and then mouthing the words as she pointed to the oven, “The pie's almost cooled enough to eat...” The reaction in the large and well-appointed room was frenzy.

To the other room, where the other kids were waiting in their father's promise- yet without him, she slipped a note with some vague hints at possible crusty bits for them to be had- sometime in the future. “Screw their dad's work, granny's intentions, grandpa's class and principles, or what is even moral and just”, she thought, “I'm takin' it.”

Then she took four plates and the pie into the room where her family lay in wait. “Here ya go kiddies- and pay no mind to your cousins in the other room- maybe I'll give them a taste later. Maybe not.. Depends on if they're noisy in there. Ha-ha.” she half-cackled with a snort.

Then without pause, and even before serving anyone else, she plated herself a big-fat load of still-steamin', sweet-berry pie, swung her ass around to fill an over-stuffed chair.