

# A pie by any other name...



The most recent edition of the Calgary Herald's *Swerve* publication (Aug 13<sup>th</sup>) included a piece on the lard versus butter debate for the perfect pie crust. The battle for the pie crust was narrowly won by restaurant guru John Gilchrist whose lard based pie was most appreciated for its nostalgic taste of grandma's pies of days past.

The universal experience that is pie. What is it about pie? Why so fascinating? Historically, pie started as a very practical usage – at first tough and hard – more used as a baking dish, storage and serving container – with only the insides to be consumed. Over time, pie with a new flakier, edible crust found its way into cookbooks for the masses – encompassing sweet along with savory, a favorite adapted into many cultures. To quote one Victorian writer, pie is 'a great human discovery which has universal estimation among all civilized eaters.'

So, all you 'civilized eaters,' what makes pie so special today?

Is it the recognition of time spent making the perfect pastry? The creative expression of crimping edges with artistic intent that brings value? The rarity of finding a pie 'made from scratch' these days? Is it the versatility of pie – to enjoy a savory, sustaining meat and gravy pie as entrée or a sweet, seasonal fruit pie as dessert? Or is it the communal experience of eating a pie with others?

Several of our staff here at River's Edge are always up to the challenge of consuming an entire pie of their own in one sitting (several have succeeded), but I would argue that it is the group experience that provides the most joy and entertainment. A pie at its best is a pie that is shared.

Thanksgiving pumpkin pie, Labour day weekend Saskatoon pie (all the tastier if made with the bountiful saskatoon's of local Solstice Berry Farm), the always popular "win my daddy's heart" granny smith apple pie, or a lovely lemon meringue "win MY heart" pie.

All flavors and styles, all created to be enjoyed by several forks, not just one. If the occasion is the motivator, then the pie is the 'icing on the cake.' A good pie can stand alone; it can hold its own. A good pie can make a grown man weep or at least sigh with deep gratitude. Generations of families have been built and sustained upon the foundation of the secret family pie recipe. The smell of a pie



baking will bring back fond memories, will instill courage in the faint hearted and will prompt men and women, boys and girls to flock to oft neglected family dining tables for a taste of simplicity, belonging and home.

That seems like a tall order for pie. And yet – as we say out here at River's Edge, "with the right resources and the right people – anything is possible." So, here's the challenge. We have some delicious pies (bake in your own oven to take the credit) and you know some marvelous people (this community is full of them). That's a recipe for greatness I would say. See you soon!

Christy Penner

Hospitality Team Leader at River's Edge Camp and Conference Centre; providing a year round 'natural setting for a supernatural experience' for campers and guests of all ages.

