

Icebox Pies

Lauren Chattman

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“The reality is that you don’t have to be a domestic goddess or fantasy grandmother to make these desserts.” Supporting this claim with one hundred inviting recipes for cold or frozen desserts, the author lives up to her reputation as creator of several down-home, eminently useful cookbooks. Brief commentary about the chapter contents, the basic ingredients, and the essential equipment needed explicates the preparation of icebox pies. It also entices the readers to choose a few recipes to get started. Choosing only a few might well be the hardest part of making the desserts!

The selection of recipes is one of the book’s major virtues. It includes old favorites like Lemon, Banana, and Coconut Cream Pies, as well as new flavors like Butterscotch Black Bottom, Toasted Almond Semifreddo Pie, and Pistachio Orange Ice Cream Pie. Chattman also offers innovative crust recipes, like Gingersnap Crust or Amaretti Crust. These festive desserts evoke celebration, and although they are certainly welcome during the summer, icebox pies provide a perfect note for company menus and holiday food year round. Some recipes, like Fig and Walnut Pie, Cherry and Chocolate Chunk Ice Cream Pie, and Caramelized Pineapple and Cream Cheese Pie, suggest the perfect denouement of a holiday feast—a dessert that is cool, light, and refreshing after heavy food.

The sectional format, with divisions covering crusts, pie types, and toppings, is sensible and handy. While Chattman promises “no baking,” there are a few exceptions—quickly baked crusts or toasted almonds. The cover photograph depicts a topping on the dessert that is not explained in the recipe, but an experienced cook could duplicate it. These glitches hardly detract from the book’s considerable charm and worth.

“Make my Triple Chocolate Mint Pie,” says Chattman, “and I promise you will be able to imagine yourself sitting in an old-fashioned kitchen, maybe at an enamel-topped table, enjoying a slice fresh from the icebox with a tall, frosty glass of milk while your apron-clad granny looks on with satisfaction.”

Ice Box Pies fulfills that promise, and the reader might well imagine these desserts at intimate suppers, family feasts, and children’s birthday parties, too.

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