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The Secret To Mission Beach Cafe's Pot Pies

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Who doesn't like pot pies? Everyone loves to dig into a piping hot one, especially in this freezing weather. Here in San Francisco the best pot pies are made at [Mission Beach Cafe](#), a cozy neighborhood eatery in the Mission. We chatted with co-owner Bill Clarke on what makes their pot pies so very delicious.

What made you decide to offer the pot pies?

Alan Carter (co-owner and pastry chef) and I used to make seafood pot pie for Christmas dinner. When we opened the restaurant in 2007, it seemed to be a natural fit due to Alan's amazing pie dough and our emphasis on fruit pies. We figured pie lovers would appreciate the savory option, although we decided that rabbit would be an interesting twist than the classic chicken pot pie.

How many pot pies do you sell?

We sell rabbit pot pie every night during the fall and winter, with more selections for our Pot Pie Tuesday. We decided to do something special for our regular diners and pot pie aficionados. It's a neighborhood value with the rabbit, beef short rib and vegetable pies in the \$16 - \$17 range, and the seafood at \$26. We sell about 45 pot pies on Tuesdays.

Why are they so popular?

We keep it seasonal, which makes customers a little cranky when we switch to BBQ Tuesdays in the late spring, but I think they enjoy having something to look forward to in the fall. Almost everyone has a fond memory of pot pie as a favorite meal on cold winter nights. If your childhood was pot pie-less, then you might try one because you've had Alan's fruit pies. If you're one of our foodie diners, you would order one due to our reputation for taking a classic dish and revamping it with interesting ingredient combinations, the best seasonal produce and meats. [Our rabbit pot pie] is a mini sensation. We can't take [it] off the menu.

How did you come up with the pie crust and recipes?

Making a free-standing pot pie shell was a long process of trial and error. How to fold the top so the crust-to-filling proportion was perfect also took some time and has evolved over the years. Each pot pie has its own recipe that I have allowed our chefs to improve upon if they have something better. We want the seasonal pot pies to reflect what's happening in Northern California culinarily, and in our restaurant, so that they fit thematically with the more adventurous offerings in the regular menu.

What's the secret to Alan's famous crust?

Alan's pie dough is one of the best you'll find in the country. His recipe calls for butter -- no lard!! -- which is why his tender crust has so much flavor and flakiness. How you mix the ingredients is the key. Alan mixes the butter, flour and water by hand -- he digs with both hands, scoops and fluffs the ingredients, being careful not to over-mix. Most problems come from over-mixing because the ingredients don't look combined enough.

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Photo courtesy of Mission Beach Cafe

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