

REO Top Ten: Pies

Thanksgiving may primarily be about a heart attitude, but is there any image we associate more with the day than food? And is there any food other than turkey that we think about more than dessert? And is there any dessert we love more at Thanksgiving than pie?

With that in mind, REO had another round of voting with abrasive arguments, snide comments and manhood questioning. All over pie. Here are the ten that came out on top, in reverse order:

10. Apple Pie



Gowdy and I had a hard fought battle over who would write a tribute to the goodly apple pie. In the end, I slew him with my gleaming scimitar and then ate some apple pie. Kidding. I didn't slay him and I haven't had apple pie in some time.

I have never made an apple pie, but I have had the honor and privilege of being on the receiving end of masters of the art

of apple pie cookery. In my mind, there are few pies as American as apple pie. Maybe pumpkin, pecan, or cherry. For my money, though, apple pie beats out these worthy opponents as far as U.S. citizenship. The apple pie can be deserved in a variety of different and very delicious ways. I have personally had so many superb types and styles that it is difficult to say an apple pie absolutely has to be in such and such a way to be a work of art. Two things, however, I do consider crucial in all varieties of apple pie: 1) A good, substantial crust and 2) a side helping of vanilla ice cream. This second is an extremely important issue. There is no adequate substitute. Anything else is uncivilized and un-American. (Ben Plunkett)

9. Key Lime Pie



I will be the first to admit that Key Lime pie is not for everyone. Unfortunately, all great people and even great foods have their detractors. After all, many are called, but few are chosen. If you like a bit of sour with all that sweet then

this is the dessert for you. That delicious graham cracker crust puts it over the top. If Key Lime pie is wrong then I don't want to be right. (Mike Lytle)

8. Cherry Pie



Maybe apple pie is more “all American” but cherry pie tastes so much better that it should be the pie that represents our great nation in all international pie competitions. Nothing says THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA better than a homemade cherry pie with lattice crust cooling on the window sill of a little house out in the country. Topped with vanilla ice cream or even whipped cream cherry pie never disappoints. The awful 80s rock band Warrant named a terrible song (and album) after this great dessert but even that travesty could not ruin it for me. My only regret is that I did not fight harder to move this higher up on our list. (Mike Lytle)

7. Snickers Pie



Snickers won our best candy bracket so the built-in taste of Snickers in anything is going to be gold. I didn't grow up with it in pie form so for the last few years I have had to make up for decades of no Snickers pie. I often look for Snickers flavored anything when going to a place that offers deserts and I am often rewarded. So putting the best candy with one of the best forms of a dessert is a can't miss. And it didn't miss, landing in our Top Ten. (Gowdy Cannon)

6. Cheesecake



Back in 2016 I did a March Madness bracket on best dessert and cheesecake won. By a landslide. It dominated the field like the '98 Yankees. The final score of the championship was 74-43. It was like watching Reagan vs. Mondale.

I heartily concurred with the result. Candy excluded, I don't know that there is anything I enjoy more for the old sweet tooth than a well-done cheesecake. Having Eli's and the Cheesecake Factory close to my Chicago address is sublime. Heck, I'll even take the \$8.99 version from Aldi. Cheesecake is that good.

True story: one of my friends that used to live in Chicago wept the first time she saw a cheesecake at Eli's. Literally cried. I mean real tears, streaming down the face as if watching the *Friends* episode where Ross and Rachel break up. What more can you say for this dessert? (Gowdy Cannon)

5. Peanut Butter Pie



I've always enjoyed Peanut Butter pie. I'm a big fan of pie and of peanut butter, so the combination of the two is right in my wheelhouse. That said, a few years ago, I was at my mother's house and she had baked a pie earlier that day from a new recipe. It was a peanut butter pie with around half the sugar as the typical peanut butter pie. My mom is a great cook but I doubted that a pie with half the sugar would be something I would enjoy. I also was pretty confident it was another of my mother's attempts to help me to do something about some of my baby fat that had proven dreadfully difficult to get rid of. [1. Side note: When baby fat hangs around for nearly 40 years, can we honestly still call it baby fat? I contend that's a bit of a gray area.] My love of pie overruled my suspicion of my mother's true motives and I ate the pie. After two pieces, I pushed away from the table with complete confidence that it was the best peanut butter pie I had ever tasted. (Phill Lytle)

4. Fudge



We were unable to find a volunteer to write the blurb for Fudge Pie, even though it finished in our top five. So, in place of another well-written, witty, and intelligent blurb, we are going to peel back the curtain and let you see how the sausage is made at RE0. Here is a sampling of our discussion about who should write the blurb:

Mike Lytle: *I like fudge pie alright but not enough to write a blurb for it. Who was pushing it during the bracket?*

Ben Plunkett: *Good question. I don't even remember ever eating it.*

Phill Lytle: *Fudge beat out:*

Banana Cream (1st round)

Strawberry (2nd round)

Peanut Butter (3rd round)

It lost to Pecan in the Final Four.

I'm pretty sure I voted for it in the first two rounds as I don't like those other pies. I know I voted for Peanut Butter over it. (I was the only one evidently as PB lost 1-5 against Fudge in the elite 8.)

Ben Plunkett: *What in the world was I thinking? Not only haven't I tried Fudge Pie, I love Peanut Butter Pie.*

after a few minutes of doing a bit more research on how the vote went down...

Phill Lytle: *I was wrong. I voted for Fudge. I know why. At that time, I hadn't tasted my mom's Peanut Butter pie – which is far superior to any Fudge pie I have ever had. Ben, you voted for PB over fudge. You were the lone PB supporter.*

Nathan Patton: *FWIW (I don't know if it's already been mentioned, but I'm too lazy to check) today is National Peanut Butter Fudge Day... also National Absurdity Day, though that's not as relevant... though maybe it is...*

And there's your blurb for Fudge Pie.

3. Chess Pie



Chess pie is above all the tired and mealy-mouthed protestations made by foodies, elitists, and health conscious. They decry its simplicity. They denounce its unashamed reliance on ingredients we have been told are no longer acceptable to a refined and mature palate. Chess pie hears their high-pitched, meddlesome squawking and rises above the fray. Chess pie hears the noise and responds with silence. Chess pie is itself the answer. Before its face questions die away. What other answer would suffice?

Check mate. (Phill Lytle)

2. Pumpkin Pie



This remains by far my favorite kind of pie. My love affair with this slice of lusciousness began with my mom's masterpieces. These have yet to be beat in mine eyes. However, (and this an incredibly strong "however.") there is something about any pumpkin pie when capably done that earns it this elite place on our list. That flawless blend of pumpkin and spices. That sweet, sweet ooze in the mouth. That harnessing in pie form of the fall and Thanksgiving spirit. Perfection. (Ben Plunkett)

1. Pecan Pie



A great pecan pie can be difficult to make. Actually, I don't know this to be true from first-hand experience. I've learned it's best to only be involved in the of eating of pies and not the process of making pies. Which is fortunate for me because I get to reap the delicious rewards from excellent bakers like my wife and mother. It's also fortunate for the world because they are not subjected to my pitiful culinary creations. Some of my baking attempts ended up as twisted monstrosities. I've yet to see masses brandishing pitchforks and torches gathered outside my house, though the sight wouldn't surprise me. But I digress! My taste buds tell me that not all pies are created equal. Some varieties are better than others. And even among a specific variety like pecan, some turn out superior to others. They also inform me that when a pecan pie has just the right balance of taste, consistency, and sweetness then it's the pie which all others look up to in envy! Like so many things in life balance is the key. "I am one with the Pie and the Pie is with me." "May the Pie be with you... always." (Mark Sass)