



This creamy, fruity, coconutty pie from [Better Homes and Gardens](#) carries sweet rich flavor in every bite. For a richer version, don't use whipped topping; make whipped cream instead. The recipe below makes the equivalent of an 8-ounce tub of whipped topping and, with the addition of stabilizers, should hold up just as well, allowing you to make it ahead for your book club.

Million Dollar Pie

Makes 8 to 10 servings

1/3 cup salted butter, melted
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1 1/4 cups finely crushed graham crackers
1 1/3 cups sweetened shredded coconut
1 1/3 cups chopped pecans
1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk

2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 can (20 ounces) crushed pineapple, drained
1 can (11 ounces) mandarin oranges, drained
1 container (8 ounces) frozen whipped topping, thawed OR made-ahead stabilized homemade whipped cream (see recipe)
Maraschino cherries (optional)

Make crust: Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly grease a 9-inch deep-dish pie plate. In a medium bowl, combine melted butter and sugar. Add crushed graham crackers; toss to mix well. Spread in prepared pie plate; press onto bottom and side. Bake 5 minutes or until edges are light brown. Remove to a wire rack to cool. (Leave oven on.)

Toast coconut and pecans: Spread coconut and chopped pecans onto a 15-by-10-inch baking pan. Bake until golden brown, 6 to 8 minutes or until coconut is lightly toasted. (Note: Keep an eye on the coconut, as it goes from white to toasted really fast.) Cool slightly. Reserve 2/3 cup of the toasted pecan-coconut mixture for garnish.

Make filling: In a large mixing bowl, combine sweetened condensed milk, lemon juice, remaining toasted coconut-pecan mixture, pineapple and oranges until well mixed. Gently fold in whipped topping or whipped cream until combined.

Assemble pie: Scoop mixture into cooled crust, spreading evenly to fill the plate. (It will seem like too much filling, but it will fit.) Cover and refrigerate until set, about 4 hours.

Sprinkle with reserved 2/3 cup coconut pecan mixture. Garnish with maraschino cherries if desired.

Stabilized Whipped Cream

Makes about 3 cups

¼ cup cold water

1 teaspoon unflavored gelatin (see note)

½ teaspoon cream of tartar

1 ¾ cup whipping cream

3 tablespoons sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Place water into a very small saucepan and sprinkle gelatin over it. After 2 or 3 minutes it will form a jelly-like mixture. Place over low heat and stir just until you are sure the gelatin is completely dissolved. Remove from heat and allow to cool.

In a small bowl, stir cream of tartar into a small amount of the whipping cream and use a whisk to be sure there are no lumps. Pour this the bowl of an electric mixer, add remaining cream and begin to whip on medium speed.

As cream begins to froth, slowly add sugar and increase speed to high. The cream will begin to increase in volume and thicken. With the machine running, slowly add cooled gelatin mixture and continue to whip until cream is light and thick, about 2 more minutes.

Use immediately or place into an airtight covered container and store in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

Notes: Cream of tartar increases the size of air bubbles in the cream. The gelatin then stabilizes the mixture and allows the whipped cream to hold its shape for several days.