

# Red Bean Pumpkin Pie

**BY ALLISON CHEN | @AL.CHENNY**

I grew up hating pumpkin pie because I always found it confusing how pumpkin could be used in a sweet application when my parents always put it in our regular winter dinner dishes. So this Thanksgiving I decided to make it my mission to make a pumpkin pie that I would enjoy eating, and that I would be happy to put on our dinner table in between the roasted turkey and duck.

I found inspiration for this pie in one of the only sweet applications of pumpkin in Chinese cuisine–nán guā bǐng. Normally, these pumpkin pancakes are stuffed with a sweet red bean filling, but instead, I stuffed both these flavors into a pie shell as a more Americanized version of this Chinese dessert.

This pie is composed of a layer of red bean pie filling, made in a similar technique to traditional pumpkin pie filling, and then topped with a pumpkin diplomat cream that has added depth from caramelized sugar. Finally a layer of unsweetened whipped cream, and like with nán guā bǐng, some extra caramelized sesame seeds for added crunch.

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**SERVES:** 6

## INGREDIENTS

### Pie

1 9-inch pie crust

### Red Bean Filling

6 tbsp granulated sugar (75 g)
¼ tsp salt (1.5 g)
1 large egg (50 g)
¾ cup sweetened red bean paste (200 g)
¾ cup evaporated milk (177 g)

### Pumpkin Diplomat Cream

½ cup granulated sugar (100 g), for the caramel
1 cup pumpkin purée (250 g)
⅔ cup whole milk (150 ml)
3 large egg yolks, room temperature
3 tbsp granulated sugar (35 g)
¼ cup cornstarch (35 g)
½ tsp salt
2 tsp pumpkin pie spice
3 tbsp unsalted butter, room temperature (42 g)
2 tsp vanilla bean paste or vanilla extract
¾ cup + 1 tbsp heavy whipping cream, cold (200 ml)

### Sesame Crunch

⅓ cup granulated sugar (65 g)
1 tbsp water (15 ml)
⅔ cup black and white sesame seeds (100 g)
1 tsp flaky salt

### For Finishing

½ cup whipping cream (120 ml), or more as needed

## INSTRUCTIONS

### 01 Bake the Red Bean Pie

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C).
2. Par-bake the pie crust until the bottom is set and just beginning to take on color. Allow to cool slightly.
3. Whisk the red bean paste, sugar, salt, and egg together until smooth. If your red bean paste is particularly firm, mash it into the egg mixture first before whisking.
4. Slowly whisk in the evaporated milk until the filling is smooth and uniform.
5. Pour the red bean filling into the par-baked crust.
6. Bake at 350°F (180°C) for about 30–40 minutes, until the edges are fully set and the center has only a slight wobble when gently shaken.
7. Cool completely at room temperature, then refrigerate until thoroughly chilled.

### 02 Make the Pumpkin Diplomat

1. Heat the pumpkin purée and whole milk together in a saucepan until warm and lightly steaming.
2. Add ½ cup (100 g) sugar to a clean saucepan in an even layer. Cook over medium heat without stirring until the sugar melts and turns a deep amber color.
3. Carefully add the warm pumpkin-milk mixture a little at a time, whisking constantly. The caramel will bubble aggressively, so do not introduce your face to the saucepan.
4. Continue heating until any hardened caramel has completely dissolved.
5. Whisk the egg yolks, 2 tbsp sugar, cornstarch, salt, and pumpkin pie spice together in a separate bowl until smooth.
6. Slowly pour about half of the hot pumpkin mixture into the yolks while whisking continuously.
7. Pour everything back into the saucepan and cook over medium heat, whisking constantly, until the pastry cream thickens and begins to bubble.
8. Cook for another 30–60 seconds after the first bubbles appear to fully cook the cornstarch.

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9. Remove from the heat and whisk in the butter and vanilla until completely smooth.
10. Transfer to a shallow container and press plastic wrap directly against the surface. Refrigerate until completely cold.
11. Whip the cold heavy cream to medium peaks.
12. Whisk the chilled pumpkin pastry cream until smooth, then gently fold in the whipped cream in 2–3 additions. The finished diplomat should be light but sturdy enough to hold its shape.

## 03 Make the Sesame Crunch

1. Combine the sugar and water in a small saucepan.
2. Cook over medium heat without stirring until the sugar reaches a medium amber caramel.
3. Add the sesame seeds and flaky salt and immediately begin stirring.
4. Continue stirring over medium-low heat. The caramel will begin coating the individual sesame seeds and the mixture should gradually break apart and become sandy rather than remaining in one large brittle.
5. Spread onto parchment paper and allow to cool completely.
6. Break apart any remaining large clusters with your hands.

## 04 Assemble

1. Spread or pipe the pumpkin diplomat cream generously over the completely chilled pie.
2. Whip remaining cream to medium to stiff peaks and pipe or spread over the pie.
3. Sprinkle generously with the sesame crunch.
4. Chill until ready to serve.