



# **The Four & Twenty Blackbirds Pie Book: Uncommon Recipes from the Celebrated Brooklyn Pie Shop**

*Emily Elsen , Melissa Elsen*

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## **The Four & Twenty Blackbirds Pie Book: Uncommon Recipes from the Celebrated Brooklyn Pie Shop**

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From the proprietors of the renowned Brooklyn shop and cafe comes the ultimate pie-baking book for a new generation of bakers.

Melissa and Emily Elsen, the twenty-something sisters who are proprietors of the wildly popular Brooklyn pie shop and cafe Four & Twenty Blackbirds, have put together a pie-baking book that's anything but humble. This stunning collection features more than 60 delectable pie recipes organized by season, with unique and mouthwatering creations such as Salted Caramel Apple, Green Chili Chocolate, Black Currant Lemon Chiffon, and Salty Honey. There is also a detailed and informative techniques section. Lavishly designed, FOUR & TWENTY BLACKBIRDS PIE BOOK contains 90 full-color photographs by Gentl & Hyers, two of the most sought-after food photographers working today.

With its new and creative recipes, this may not be you mother's cookbook, but it's sure to be one that every baker from novice to pro will turn to again and again.

## **The Four & Twenty Blackbirds Pie Book: Uncommon Recipes from the Celebrated Brooklyn Pie Shop Details**

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# **From Reader Review The Four & Twenty Blackbirds Pie Book: Uncommon Recipes from the Celebrated Brooklyn Pie Shop for online ebook**

## **Mairzi says**

Interesting ideas in many of the recipes and beautiful illustrations but many of the recipes are lacking specificity which can cause confusion.

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## **Wanda says**

At least one crust that I think I can do gluten-free. Must try the peach pie and rhubarb custard pie.

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## **Laurel Bradshaw says**

This is a WOW book for me, and one that I just might have to purchase, since I want to make every pie in the book! So why "only" 4 stars? Mostly just to caution readers that this is probably not a pie book for beginners. Yes, there are detailed instructions given, but I found them just a bit overly fussy. (Seriously? Chilling the pie crust dough at three different steps of construction?) Experienced bakers will know where they can take shortcuts. Also, many of the recipes call for some rather esoteric ingredients. Like Angostura bitters (used in almost every recipe), vanilla paste, rose water, and wild ginger. Again - experienced bakers will know what can be left out, and or substituted for. That said, if you are looking for something beyond the ordinary, this might be the book for you (or me!) The illustrations alone will give you ideas for lattice and other decorative crust treatments. I like the seasonal arrangement of the book, and the emphasis on high-quality, fresh ingredients. They also provide online sources for some of the more hard-to-find ingredients.

I decided to test one of the recipes for Pi Day (March 14.) Had to use what I had on hand without shopping for ingredients. To my mind, that is the mark of a good cookbook - or maybe it says more about the cook - can I use the recipes for ideas without sticking to it exactly... So I foraged in my freezer and came up with a bag still left of last year's rhubarb crop. Too early here in Minnesota for fresh! I also had a bag of storebought rhubarb to add to that. Then I looked at the several rhubarb pie recipes in the book and settled on the Rhuby Razz Square Pie. Perfect! I had a half a bag of frozen raspberries to use up. Still not enough fruit for the recipe, so I added a bag of frozen blueberries. There was a Bluebarb Slab Pie recipe in the book, but that called for double quantities, so I stuck with the square pie recipe. I could have made it in a regular pie dish, but I liked the novelty of trying it in a square pan. I liked the addition of cider vinegar to the crust recipe. That might just become my new go-to crust recipe. For the filling, I did not have any arrowroot. Substituted some egg replacer (potato/tapioca starch). Nor did I have any Angostura bitters. I substituted a little lemon juice. It turned out beautifully and tasted delicious! My biggest problem was what to call it. Razy Bluebarb Pie? Blueby Razz Pie? Rhuby Razzblue Pie?

Book Description: Melissa and Emily Elsen, the twenty-something sisters who are proprietors of the wildly popular Brooklyn pie shop and cafe Four & Twenty Blackbirds, have put together a pie-baking book that's anything but humble. This stunning collection features more than 60 delectable pie recipes organized by

season, with unique and mouthwatering creations such as Salted Caramel Apple, Green Chili Chocolate, Black Currant Lemon Chiffon, and Salty Honey. There is also a detailed and informative techniques section. Lavishly designed, **FOUR & TWENTY BLACKBIRDS PIE BOOK** contains 90 full-color photographs by Gentl & Hyers, two of the most sought-after food photographers working today.

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### **Jennie says**

The pie crust alone is worth the price of admission. The sweet cherry struesel pie is heaven in a plate.

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### **Ditchface says**

Although the inspiration and flavour ideas in this book are great, the instructions are pretty poor. I've been a home baker 10+ years, but following their recipes just didn't yield good results on multiple occasions. The Elsen sisters enthusiasm for pie is wonderful to read, but their instinct for baking perhaps left the recipes I tried lacking the kind of helpful tips and explanation that really make a difference to someone who didn't grow up making pies. Last grievance: cups are an infuriating form of measurement - fiddly, harder to clean up and imprecise. Proper baking books measurements come in grams or at the very least, ounces.

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### **Claire says**

Recipes tried: basic pastry (good), regular rhubarb pie (very good), rhubarb raspberry square pie (good flavor, don't get the point of it being square. Too hard to serve.)  
Planning to make grapefruit custard pie eventually.

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### **Angela says**

This is an excellent book for novelty and classic pies - there are step by step instructions for everything including what items you must have to be successful in the prep, how to for excellent pie crust - even how to roll it out. Honestly, I don't even like buying pies anymore because this book has taught me how to make pies that are better than anything I've ever tasted at the store. It's not a humble brag, I give all the credit to this book!

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### **Cecelia says**

For years, pie was one of those things I was intimidated by. Why? It's a marquee holiday dessert, easy to get wrong (the crust!), and the whole process is fairly long and labor-intensive. I got over that fear thanks to my best friend's aunt - she took a day and demystified pie for us two aspiring bakers in her large, sunny kitchen. These days, Thanksgiving isn't complete if I haven't made three pies.

That said, I wasn't in a hurry to branch out from the exact technique Aunt Laura taught us. UNTIL. I asked

my local library to order a copy of *The Four & Twenty Blackbirds Pie Book: Uncommon Recipes from the Celebrated Brooklyn Pie Shop*. I borrowed it, but only peeked inside once before returning it. When I found out that authors Emily and Melissa Elsen would be at the Baltimore Book Fest this past fall, I made it my mission to go to their presentation. Which was awesome. I was an instant convert (the Bourbon Pear Crumble pie slices they passed around didn't hurt). Armed with this cookbook and my newly-acquired tools of the trade (thanks to the holidays!), I feel like an adventurous baker. Long live pie!

This cookbook is as advertised: it's a collection of pie recipes from the pie shop that South Dakota-raised sisters Emily and Melissa Elsen own and run in Brooklyn, New York. If you're like me, the mention of Brooklyn + \_\_\_\_\_ [insert some trendy thing here] makes you a little wary. I always wonder, "Will this be for real? Or did it just get this far because NYC is the center of the world (at least according to New Yorkers and half of the East Coast)." Luckily, this pie book has solid roots – decades of baking and food service run along the Elsen girls' maternal line. Though they're self-taught, Emily and Melissa's recipes and methods are reliable (and delicious).

The cookbook is arranged seasonally, by what ingredients are available when. The pie crust recipes are at the back, and notes on sourcing ingredients and techniques (including step-by-step photos) for crust construction are at the front. I skipped over a lot of those notes at first in favor of staring at the stunning photos of individual pies (really, it's enough to make you want to lick the pages!). One of the best bits about seeing Emily and Melissa in person was their reiteration of suggestions in the book – the little things that make the baking process easier. Most helpful to me were mentions of which tools are hardiest (they're fans of OXO) and necessary (I HAD to have a pastry scraper!), versus others that they could take or leave. It's also confidence boosting to just see someone else make a crust in front of you. You end up thinking, "If they can do that in front of a crowd, on a time schedule, in warm-to-hot weather under a pavilion, I can definitely do it in my kitchen!"

And I have. So far I've made their Bourbon Pear Crumble, Lemon Chess, Salted Caramel Apple, and Browned Butter Pumpkin pies. All of them 'turned out' beautifully, but the most popular were the lemon chess and pumpkin. The pumpkin survived a flight to Syracuse at Thanksgiving! I've never before felt so many envious eyes on me as when I carried it through the security line at Reagan National Airport. \*grin\*

Best part of the cookbook: uhhh... everything? I adore it. I take it off the shelf often, and I think I will continue to do so. It's dead useful for anyone interested in pie, and it's ridiculously pretty. It also hasn't steered me wrong yet – the recipes, if you follow them to the letter, are kind of ridiculously reliable. My OCD-prone baking soul is content. Worst part: again, I don't have anything to say here. You can skip over the intro if you want, but the rest is readable and useful.

In conclusion: if pie matters to you, get this book. Buy/borrow/whatever-you-have-to-do. It's worth a perusal for the photos alone, but I've found it extremely practical and inspiring, as well. A+.

Recommended for: pie bakers (from aspiring to experienced), those interested in local/seasonal food preparation, and anyone with an eye for attractive cookbook design.

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**benquick says**

A pie crust that I couldn't mess up. Fantastic.

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## Jacqueline Redmond says

### Great pie book!

Loved how it was set out in seasons! It was really easy to follow along and the recipes were well written.

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## ItsAboutTheBook says

*Review can be read at It's About The Book*

I fell in love with this book before I bought it. I came across the recipe for Salty Honey pie on a food blog and had ordered the book before the pie was fully baked and out of the oven. I am a very adventurous eater and love the recipes that push the boundaries of what we currently consider the usual dessert flavors. Whereas you will see cinnamon spicing up a fruit pie, you're also likely to encounter paprika and white pepper. Custards are flavored with chamomile and lavender. These are flavors that could be referred to as esoteric, consequently, if you're looking for Snickers pie or a basic Banana Cream, this is not the book for you.

The recipes themselves are arranged by season, starting with spring. Seasonal produce is highlighted. The summer section is a bonanza of variations on berry and orchard fruit pies. The fall section has seasonal favorites such as Apple and Pumpkin, albeit they've got their own spin.

If you're a beginning baker or cook I would advise you to approach this book with respect and maybe a touch of caution. Many of the recipes require multiple steps that alone are not at all daunting, but can combine to be a little overwhelming. Also, as many beginner cooks have relatively thin pantries, be aware the ingredient lists can be quite long and possibly not what you'd expect from a typical baking book. I would recommend you opt for the inclusion of Angostura bitters, or any other variety of cocktail bitters, when it's listed, but that does require purchasing a bottle if it's not something you've already got on hand. I am totally the kind of person with Angostura on hand. At all times. In the large bottle.

Crust is kind of the great sticking point with pies. Pies are an appreciable amount of work and can be expensive depending on ingredients. No one wants to go through all that effort to have a crust that tastes plain and feels like cardboard. I, personally, wasn't really enamored with the basic pastry crust recipes in this book. I tend to make the same pastry crust, over and over, and the Pastry Police have not shown up at my home. The animal cookie crumb crust however, was totally awesome. Use the crust that makes you happy, because you're the one that gets to eat it. The descriptions of how to roll out dough, create a basic lattice, and prebaking were all well thought out and easily understandable for a cook at any level of experience.

I would like to add the book itself is absolutely gorgeous. This is truly top notch food photography that showcased these pies beautifully.

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## **Becca says**

I thought I'd never say this, but this book has converted me into a pie crust lover! Even other family members who hate pie crust were converted with me. I checked it out from the library and after baking four pies, bought it for myself to keep!

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## **emily says**

This book just gifted me not only my new favorite pie, but my family's new must-have Thanksgiving pie, and my ultimate favorite pie crust recipe. I've wanted this book for a couple of years and I'm so glad I finally have it.

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## **Libby says**

This is my Holy Grail of pie cookbooks. Probably not for beginners and the spice profile tends to be similar from pie to pie, but just knocks it out of the park as far as I'm concerned. Special mention to the raspberry rhubarb pie and the oat crust recipe.

Be aware that some of the recipes do omit sugar, which was an accident. I think they might have fixed it in new editions? Anyway, for those add 1/3 cup white sugar and you should be golden. Also, you're not going to need all the liquid specified for the crust, just add it a bit at a time until it combines.

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## **Autumn Garner says**

I love to bake and I love a really great story, so this cookbook was perfect for me. The layout of the instructions and the amount of detail these two women put into the book are astonishing. If you aren't a baker and would like to be, I would start with this book solely for the guides and resources it provides.

The only reason I didn't give this book 5 stars is because these recipes are truly "unusual". There are maybe three recipes in there that I would actually consider making and the rest are just pretty to look at. Other than that the book is great.

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