

THE GRAIL

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ISSUE II

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IN DEFENSE OF THE GRIM REAPER

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FROM THE EDITORS

To our readers,

Fall is here, and so is *The Grail* to give you all the autumnal content you crave! Especially if Halloween (or fall break) flew by too fast, we have a few spooky (and some downright slimey) stories for you. We begin with Jack's debate on behalf of the Grim Reaper (3), and a dreamy poem by Sophie H. (4). Read on to find out the conclusion of Sophia's short story "Bone Deep," (5-6) and see more of Sophia T.'s marvelous and macabre illustrations (7). Lillie C. explores love in post-apocalyptic England alongside first-time contributor Sarah

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P.S. If you're interested in writing for us, we meet every Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. in the Student Publications Office.

Love,

Dan, Lauren, Sophie, and Ben

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Front cover photo of Hallerbos Forest in Belgium by Sophie Halpin

Pomp and Psycho-stance:

A Brief Discussion of the Morality of the Grim Reaper

By JACK MADER

psy·cho·pomp

/ˈsɪkəˌpɑmp/

noun

noun: **psychopomp**; plural noun: **psychopomps**; noun: **psychopompos**; plural noun: **psychopompoi**

1. (in Greek mythology) a guide of souls to the place of the dead.

o the spiritual guide of a living person's soul.

Eventually, Death will arrive knocking at your front door, making sure its records are accurate, and will whisk you away to the afterlife (which might not actually exist, but we're going to make that assumption for this metaphorical discussion anyway, whatever, fuck off). In order to better understand and rationalize the phenomenon of death, a common occurrence in mythology is to reimagine it as personified force. Death exists in many forms, depending on the culture one looks at. For instance, in Greek mythology, Thanatos is the personification of Death itself. In Hindu scripture, the lord of death, King Yama (or Yamaraja) rules over his court in hell, dispensing judgement to one's mortal soul, which allows him to determine the condition into which souls reincarnate. The inevitability of Death and its all-encompassing nature has influenced and scared the shit out of people throughout history, resulting in many wacky ideas, from the Danse Macabre to Hell itself.

And speaking of Hell, discussions of Death often go hand in hand with the afterlife, the eventual residing place for all souls and further human consciousness. However, navigating through normal life is already difficult. The afterlife is a whole different ball game, where the rules of, you know, mortal existence don't really apply. The journey to your soul's resting place is a long, dangerous one, full of pitfalls and potential **dead ends**. The realm of the dead plays by different rules, rules that would be completely unrealizable to the recently not-alived. Surely, whatever entity that's making you go through this whole dying ordeal doesn't expect you to figure all this out yourself right?

Psychopomps exist in many forms throughout multiple different cultures and fulfill their duty by guiding the souls

of the newly dead to their resting place in the afterlife. We're talking Anubis, Egyptian god of the dead, and a sure favorite at parties. Charon, the Greek boatman of the river Styx, who will ferry you across the river for a gold coin. The Valkyries of Norse mythology select those who died in battle to serve as einherjar in the eternal frat party in the sky. All of these mythological entities are intimately tied to death and facilitate the passage of one's mortal soul into the afterlife, but would any of these figures be considered morally reprehensible? Would one generally consider them to be, in fact, evil? I assume the answer is no here. It certainly is for me. Why then, is pop-culture's most prominent psychopomp so generally seen in such a negative light. I am of course speaking of the big scythe carryin', black robe flowin', mysteriously floatin'... Grim Reaper.

What I'm trying to say is that the Grim Reaper gets a bad rap. I mean, imagine if your spirit just up and yeets right out of your body; you're a ghost floating over your corpse like "well damn," and then this huge robed skeleton looking dude with a scythe shows up. You'd probably be really scared at first, but then Big Grim starts talking, and it says "Hey, hate to tell you this, but you're dead." You'd most likely be pretty incredulous at the whole situation. I mean this kind of thing definitely would never happen to you in your life. Next thing you know, you're yelling at big Grim with tears rolling down your face, talking about how you don't want to go, and it's all Grim's fault. Seeing your reaction, now Grim is upset too, talking about how it's just the job; it's not like it's his fault that you're dead. It was just your time. Grim can't put you back in your body, so instead, he extends his bony hand in an offer to walk you into the afterlife as your personal guide, and when you think about it, that's honestly a very heartfelt move, coming from the reaper of souls. I know I'd hate to try and make my way to the afterlife by myself. I think it's very sweet of Big Grim to try and help you make sense of the whole situation. Probably very jarring. I can understand the initial fear, the Grim Reaper doesn't exactly look like the type of dude that would get invited to a lot of parties or anything, what with the giant grass cutter and ominous robe and everything. Either way, I think it's important to define the Grim Reaper as the messenger of Death and not death itself. The Grim Reaper is only the guide for your soul on its eventual path, not your killer. Anyway, maybe I watched too much *Billy and Mandy* as a kid, but I think that the Grim Reaper gets a lot of unnecessary hate.

L O G I C A L

by Sophie Halpin

The effect follows the cause,
and because we think, we *sleep*—

we think.

“Why can’t you *dance*?” they say.
she tries, instead, to think.

(she thinks, instead, to dream.)

And **form** is function.
Structure, order.

And, without the structure,
it will crush her,

The *river* flowing
serous and free.

Seriously is all she thinks.
I think.

And seriously, she needs a break
before she breaks into two
and becomes

Someone who thinks instead of dreams
and forgets to dance with *wild* things.

Bone Deep

Part 2

By SOPHIA KONGSHAUG

You hear the front door creak open and the sound of your brother exhaling, deep. You listen to the sounds of his fork scraping across the plate over your mother snoring in the next room. You step out through the hallway, and into the kitchen. Your brother stands silhouetted in the dim light over the stove, still in his heavy jacket and cargo pants, black grease smudged around his fingertips. He smells of sweat and iron.

You begin to speak. You tell him about the woods. The fence. The ravine. You don't tell him everything. You tell him that you were meeting someone, someone who never showed up.

"I just want to check," you say. "Just to be sure."

"Where'd you meet him?" your brother asks.

"School," you say.

You don't say that it's not a boy. You don't bother to make up a name.

"Can we go check?" you ask. "Please, you owe me."

Your brother exhales through his teeth. He probably thinks you've been stood up. Pities you, maybe, but you hope that he is also remembering the amount of times you've let his ex-girlfriend crawl out through the small window over your bed at the crack of dawn. After a moment he puts his plate and fork into the sink and nods.

The truck rumbles back to life, headlights flashing against the bushes that border your front yard. You sit in the passenger seat with a nearly industrial-sized flashlight in your lap and your brother's hunting rifle in the backseat. You direct him to Humbleton Road. He is quiet, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes. There is no one else on the road. You grip the flashlight as the pavement turns into gravel, until at last you reach the fence. Your brother looks over.

"This the place?"

You nod, and he shuts off the ignition, grabbing the rifle. You switch on the flashlight and step down from the truck. The temperature has dropped, and you shiver underneath two layers. Fog from both your mouths spills out into the beam of light as you approach the hole in the fence. You slip through, and then, with some difficulty, so does your brother. He stays a half step behind you through the woods, and you hold the flashlight ahead with both hands. It's not hard to find the way to the ravine, you can even see some of your own frantic footsteps from earlier. After a few moments the trees clear and the ground is silver with moonlight. You step out over the ridge, sweeping

the beam of light back and forth, looking for the little hitch in the stone where the path began. You don't see it. You step closer to the edge and kneel down. The flashlight extends down, down into the ravine. You move it along the face of the cliff and it is a smooth drop five, ten, twenty feet down the edge. There is no path. There is no opening. There is just stone and moss and deep black.

You hear a twig snap. There is something standing on the edge of the cliff, about twenty feet away, a black shape barely moving. You swing the light up and the wide, blank eyes of a doe stare back at you. The doe, slick and wet with rain, flares open its lips. Out of the corner of your eye your brother steps forward past you, and the light shakes in your hands but all you can see is the deer's mouth. Inside it there are things much smaller and whiter than they should be on a deer this size, and the shape of its mouth is all wrong too, it's round and wide instead of narrow.

It turns to face you head on and the teeth in its mouth are so small and pink-tinged and familiar and then you know that they are *hers* and they are *her teeth* inside its mouth, which has now begun to open fully, stretching and stretching wider than you know it should be able to and it is so far away yet you can see the light gleam off each tip of the pointed canines and wide incisors and low, crevassed molars. You are frozen in place, you cannot tear your eyes away as its mouth is opening wider and wider and you do not remember what her eyes looked like but the eyes that are looking at you now are not the eyes of a deer. There is a strange buzzing in your ears and you feel as if its head is getting closer to you, or you are moving closer to it, and even though your feet are planted into the earth, its face is all that you can see, large eyes and wide-toothed smile.

In an instant there is a crack that rips through the air and you find the light falling from between your fingertips.

Your ears are ringing. There is an acrid smell in your nose and you kneel down to grab the flashlight from where it landed among the damp moss. You swing it up to see your brother squatting down next to it, and its chest is heaving up and down, dark thick blood trickling into the grass. You stand up and begin to walk towards it.

"Just a deer," your brother says.

Your knees give out about five feet away.



Iceland by SOPHIE HALPIN

You crawl up close to its mouth as it gurgles and quiets, rain soaking through the fabric of your jeans. Its mouth is long, triangular, fur-covered. Its eyes are bulged black, side-facing and motionless. You reach your hand out and slowly push up its lip. It is warm and feels of rubber. You lean forward. The teeth are jagged, yellowing and too wide to be human. Saliva bubbles in the corner of its mouth, and you let the lip ooze back down.

Just a deer.

“You alright?” Your brother asks. “Let’s get out of here, I don’t think he’s coming.”

He pulls you up by the elbow and hands you the rifle. He leans down towards the carcass and you feel a small spasm in your chest.

“Wait,” you find yourself saying. “Can we leave it here?”

Your brother looks back to you. You glance from side to side, but outside of the beam of light you cannot see anything.

“Waste of good meat,” he says.

The flashlight shakes in your hands. You do not look down towards the body.

“Please,” you say, “let’s just leave.”

He exhales and pushes his hand through his hair, grabbing the flashlight out of your hands and turning back towards the wood. You stand for a moment facing inky black. There is a strange, gripping feeling in your chest. You do not want to turn your back on the ravine. You do not

want to look away. You do not want to blink.

A frigid raindrop slides down the back of your neck, causing your head to jerk back suddenly, breaking your stare. You hear your brother huff impatiently behind you, and so you turn and hurry towards the treeline. You don’t look back at the ravine.

You stand with your fingers curled around the rusty chain-link as your brother squeezes back through the hole in the fence. You pass the rifle to him, and then push your left leg through the opening. Bending sideways to fit your torso through the gap, you see something white tumble out of your coat pocket. You reach for it, then stop, your hand hovering over the crumpled ball of paper. You catch a glimpse of smudged writing along the top of the page.

Muddy boots. Flashlight in teeth?

You withdraw your hand and squeeze the rest of your body through the hole, leaving the paper to soak into the muddy ground on the other side of the fence.

You climb into the passenger seat with shaky legs and stare through the windshield as your brother steers away from the fence and bounces down the gravel road. You are both silent for several minutes, as the fence and the turn-off towards Humbleton road disappear in the rearview mirror behind you.

Your brother shifts in his seat, glancing over at you once he’s pulled onto the highway.

“Sorry about your date,” he says. “I bet he was a real piece of shit anyway.”



Graverobber by SOPHIA TIDWELL

The Cask of Dom Pérignon

By LILLIE CASE

“Say no more, Marcel. Your hesitation now speaks more to me than your words ever could. You have my permission.”

The young man frowned. “Sir, there appears to be a bit of a misunderstanding. I wasn’t requesting your permission, per se, I was simply—”

“The permission has been granted, my boy! Smile, be merry! Let us celebrate! More Dom Pérignon?”

He gave a tight sigh and laid his intense gaze upon the older gentleman. Devereux appeared not have heard his objection, for he now filled both of their crystalline flutes, spoke a hearty “To the union!” and emptied his glass.

“Sir, with the utmost possible respect, your daughter isn’t going to receive any offers other than my own.”

“Why, of course not! Don’t be foolish! I’ve just promised you her hand, haven’t I?”

“There are, quite literally, no other bachelors left in the English countryside.”

The older man’s face darkened momentarily, a specter of remembrance haunting his expression. “I suppose that is true, isn’t it. The end of civilization, and whatnot.” But the spell left him as quickly as it had come; he turned to the suitor with his flaming eyes, no less put out than the fires of Hell. “No matter! If the rest of the lot were here, I’d still pick you. A good and virtuous man. Marcel, the priest from a land far away. Yes, I’m certain of it—you are the handsome young man I’d want to depetal and deflower my young Violet.”

He choked on his drink and immediately reddened. “Monseigneur Devereux—!”

The old man laughed boisterously, clapping Marcel upon his shoulder. “A test, my dear boy! You’ve passed with flying colors. Another drink!”

“I haven’t finished the one you poured me two minutes ago. Perhaps we should—”

“Marcel, you clever little devil, you’re absolutely right! What am I thinking, getting us drunk on champagne? A red! That is what we need! A nice, dark red. I know just the sort.” A delicate beam of moonlight caught the pink in his cheeks as he stood and started for the door.

“Sir. There is one matter of importance that I wish to resolve before I wed your lovely daughter.”

“Yes?” Devereux returned to his armchair, easily tempted in his current state. “Out with it, then!”

“Her beliefs are quite different than my own. Commu-

nion, the Last Judgement, the man called Jesus Christ... They’re all quite nonsense, if you ask me. How would you propose that I—how does one put this kindly—persuade her of the correct path?”

Again, his spirits faded. “Right,” he said, donning an unusual tone of seriousness. “I suppose you might begin by confronting her about it.”

The bachelor nodded but remained silent. The old man stared out the window. In the strength of Devereux’s every movement, Marcel saw what made him the undisputed leader of this community, and he burned.

He coveted what Devereux had achieved for himself in the Aftermath.

“Confronting her by saying—what, exactly?”

“I’m here to ask you about that.”

The suitor straightened in his seat, overcome with the power of his Savior. “I will tell her, Violet, I know that you have lived your whole life believing in the God of your ancestors, and while they are entitled to believe as they will, their system of morality is utterly and entirely wrong. The only true way to Salvation is the Path of the Sun. If you permit me to guide you into Their Light, and repent as They see fit, then I’m certain that your heresy will eventually be forgiven.”

He narrowed his eyes at the young man, who appeared to not realize the treacherous ground he had tread upon. “You seem to have it all planned out. Why discuss this matter with me and not your confrères?”

Having misjudged the old man’s state of sobriety, Marcel winced and attempted to reconcile his transgression. “Well, you see, sir, it’s just that—you’re her father. I assumed that you might—”

“—might know her better than you? For Heaven’s sake, you are her fiancé! There isn’t a soul in England who should have a more intimate knowledge of Violet than you!”

At the evocation of the Lord, Marcel stiffened, and his upper lip began to twitch.

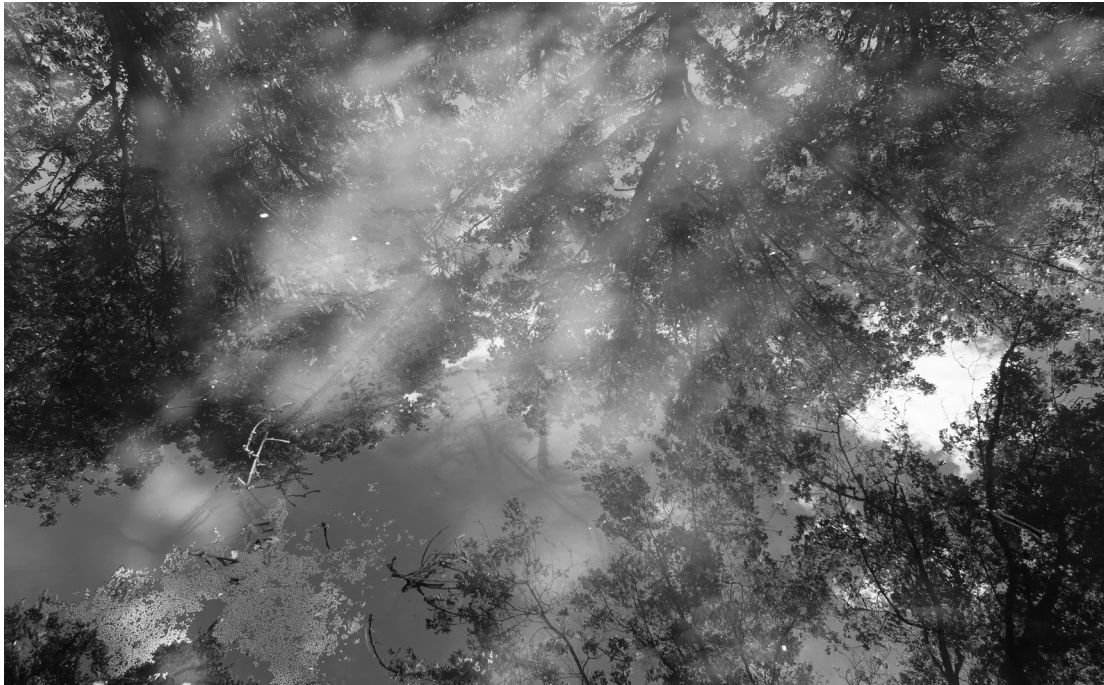
Before he could utter a word edgewise, the old man spoke. “Oh, my dear boy—that was absolutely not my intention. I must extend to you my sincerest apologies. I rather lost my head for a moment. You were quite right to have asked me that—it was brilliant thinking on your part.”

More at ease, Marcel settled back in his chair. "Well?"

"I will answer shortly, but if you will excuse me for one moment... I think that now would be the opportune time for the red." With a good-natured wink, he disappeared.

Marcel threw up his hands, waiting once again for this drunkard of a step-father to return from his cellar. Devereux came back to the parlor with two ornate goblets. He offered one to the suitor, proclaiming boldly, "It's my finest drinkware and my finest drink, I hope that you find it to your liking, bottoms up! Drink, drink, my boy! To the newest Devereux! To my daughter's virginity! To the Lord, Jesus Christ! Amen!"

The young man would never know exactly what words were spoken. The poison seized his body as soon as the laced wine slid down his throat, and the final scene seared into his life was Devereux pouring out his goblet onto his convulsing body.



Photos by SARAH BUTA

Twilight Goodbye

By RAFA SAMPAIO

In the hazy twilight of
Dark fine trees and car lights
Returning home
To
Low eyes
And poor jokes,
Stood the silhouette
Of a girl who came short

In her fine room,
One last time,
To clean out
A mess.
Can't fix it.
Just let be it
With future hazy.
Let us buzz around
With eyes low
Laughing to poor jokes.
no tears

Last box packed
After we unpacked
How each of us were.
Sadness dripped from our faces
No Tears
And its vapor loomed through the room.

To say goodbye
We took the books
From our beginnings
And lay them in a pit.
And—black flowers
From burning book
We made
To smile again

In hazy air
From smoke and tears
Embracing the silhouette girl
We sent certainty to meet her again
Maybe not between these fine trees
Or her fine room,
But we'll never fall short
When it comes to being with her.
And everything became fine.
Well, not okay, but clear.

Slime Review

Slime is for college students too

By LAUREN MONDROSKI



#SLIMEHAUL

This week, the Grail is proud to feature journalism on a subject that is sure to benefit the Reed College community at large, through its potential to offer direly needed stress-relief, unadulterated joy, and stimulation of the senses — slime (What? Did you think I was going to mention any college-sponsored programming?). Putty, goo, ooze — whatever you call it, since its commercial invention in 1943, this squishy and viscous quasi-solid has entertained children for decades. At least, that was until The Grail ventured into the Dollar Tree on Foster to obtain all nine types of slime that the store has to offer for review for the student body.

This review of slime was conducted by a board of three certified and unbiased slime professionals (aka my housemates, Kira, Isabel and Stephanie) and evaluates five criteria for establishing its merit: squish, sound, smell, appearance/aesthetic, and a bonus category that allows the reviewers to account for special characteristics such as function and presentation.

Flarp Noise Putty (Specifically the Blue Color)

Rating: 11/10

Unanimously, the classic Blue Flarp Noise Putty was the favorite of the board. Offering the perfect consistency, an intoxicating blue-raspberry Jolly Rancher aroma, and the sweet, sweet sounds of flatulence, Flarp is perfect for solo slime time, and for group enjoyment of the many shapes and sounds it can provide. It is the clear winner for the longest lasting, bang-for-your (literal) buck entertainment.

“There’s just something gay about Flarp.”

Creature Oozy Goo and Crystal Putty

Rating: 9.5/10

These two are very similar types of slime but offer distinct advantages that set them apart. They are both translucent, colorful, solid yet yielding slimes. The Oozy Goo is a firm, almost “al dente” feeling substance, and as an added bonus, BIRTHS a plastic spider. If slime was a mattress, then the Crystal Putty would be the ~softer~ equivalent, for people who need or desire a less hardcore but equally fulfilling slime experience. Plus, it has a breathtakingly iridescent SPARKLE.

Bubble Goo

Rating: 7/10

This slime has an excellent consistency, and wins major bonus points because you can basically use a Boba Straw to blow big, ooey-goey bubbles out of it. It’s like hitting a slime Juul. However, it seems to dry out fairly quickly, offering ephemeral satisfaction.

As one reviewer notes:

“The one night stand of slime.”

Glitter Slime

Rating: 2/10

Pretty in its prism, the appeal of glitter slime falls apart the minute it comes out of its container. Glitter is everywhere — on your hands, on the table, contaminating all the other good slime. For our reviewers, residue is the biggest no-no. It breaks apart like bad, bad jello.

“It’s pretty though!” “Actually, I find it visually not compelling.”

Goofy Putty

Rating: 0.5/10

The only positive feature of this slime is that it comes in an egg; otherwise, reviewers noted that it felt like they were playing with an old piece of gum. At least it’s better than having no slime at all.

“Unoriginal”

*This article is not sponsored by Dollar Tree or Big Slime™

My Father's Apple Pie

By KATHERINE GRAVES

In the Draves household, nothing is as sacred as pie. No holiday or birthday was ever complete without a pie made by my father. There was something so magical about spending a whole day with my (usually very busy) father creating a delicious pie for our family to share. Something so warm and so cozy. Turn a dreary day into a homey fall afternoon with this classic apple pie recipe.

Supplies

Oven, preferably a convection oven. Preheat to 450 degrees F.
Pie plate, I recommend a glass or ceramic deep-dish pie plate
Rolling pin, a cylindrical wine bottle works in a pinch
Assorted measuring cups and spoons
2 butter knives
Saran wrap or wax paper

Ingredients

For the filling

4-8 granny smith apples (depending on the size of your pie plate)

Juice of 1 lemon
1 cup of brown sugar
1/4 cup of cornstarch
1/2 tsp of cinnamon
Sprinkle of nutmeg
2 tbsp of butter

For the crust

2 cups of flour
1 tsp of salt
3/4 cup of Crisco (room temperature)
2 tbsp cold butter (cold)
Cold water

Process

To make the filling

1. Peel, quarter, and core the apples. Cut into thin slices approximately 1-2 mm thick.
2. Gently toss the apples with the juice of one lemon until they are all covered.
3. Add brown sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon, and nutmeg.
4. Let rest in the refrigerator.

To make the dough

1. Carefully measure the flour, making sure to tap out air pockets in the cup measure. Gently mix in the salt.
2. Add the Crisco and butter. Using two butter knives and

a cutting motion, slice through the pieces of butter and Crisco to incorporate them into the dry ingredients. When they are mostly combined, use your fingers to smush any remaining fat pieces into the dough. By the end, there should be a few pea sized pieces but most should be the size of a grain of rice.

3. Sprinkle in cold water a few tablespoons at a time. Use the same knife and cutting technique to incorporate the water. Continue adding water and cutting it in until the dough begins to stick together, typically about 1/4 cup of water.
4. Gently smush the dough into a ball. Do not knead it because that will make the dough tough.
5. Cut the dough ball in half. Put one half in between two pieces of saran wrap or wax paper. Gently roll out the dough. Repeat with the other half.

To assemble the pie

1. Peel off the top layer of saran wrap from one rolled-out dough sheet. Using the bottom saran wrap layer, carefully flip the dough into the pie plate and gently push it along the bottom of the pie pan.
2. Place the filling into the pie pan. Layer them in flat so they are as densely packed as possible. Mound the apples about 2-3 inches above the top of the pie plate because they will shrink when baked.
3. Add 2 tbsp of butter in thin slices to the top center of the apple mound.
4. Peel off the top layer of saran wrap for the other rolled-out dough sheet. Using the bottom saran wrap layer, carefully flip the dough on top of the apples. Cut off any excess dough but leave 1-2 inches around the pie pan.
5. Using the extra dough, gently crimp the top crust dough into the bottom crust around the edge of the pie. Cut a few small steam vents into the top of pie.

To bake the pie

1. Bake for approximately 10 minutes at 450 degrees until the crust is a nice golden brown.
2. Turn the temperature down to 350 degrees and bake for another 30-45 minutes. Look for steam or bubbles to ensure the filling is fully cooked before removing from the oven.
3. Let it rest for at least 1 hour before eating (preferably 2-4 hours or until cool).
4. Serve with vanilla ice cream and good company.