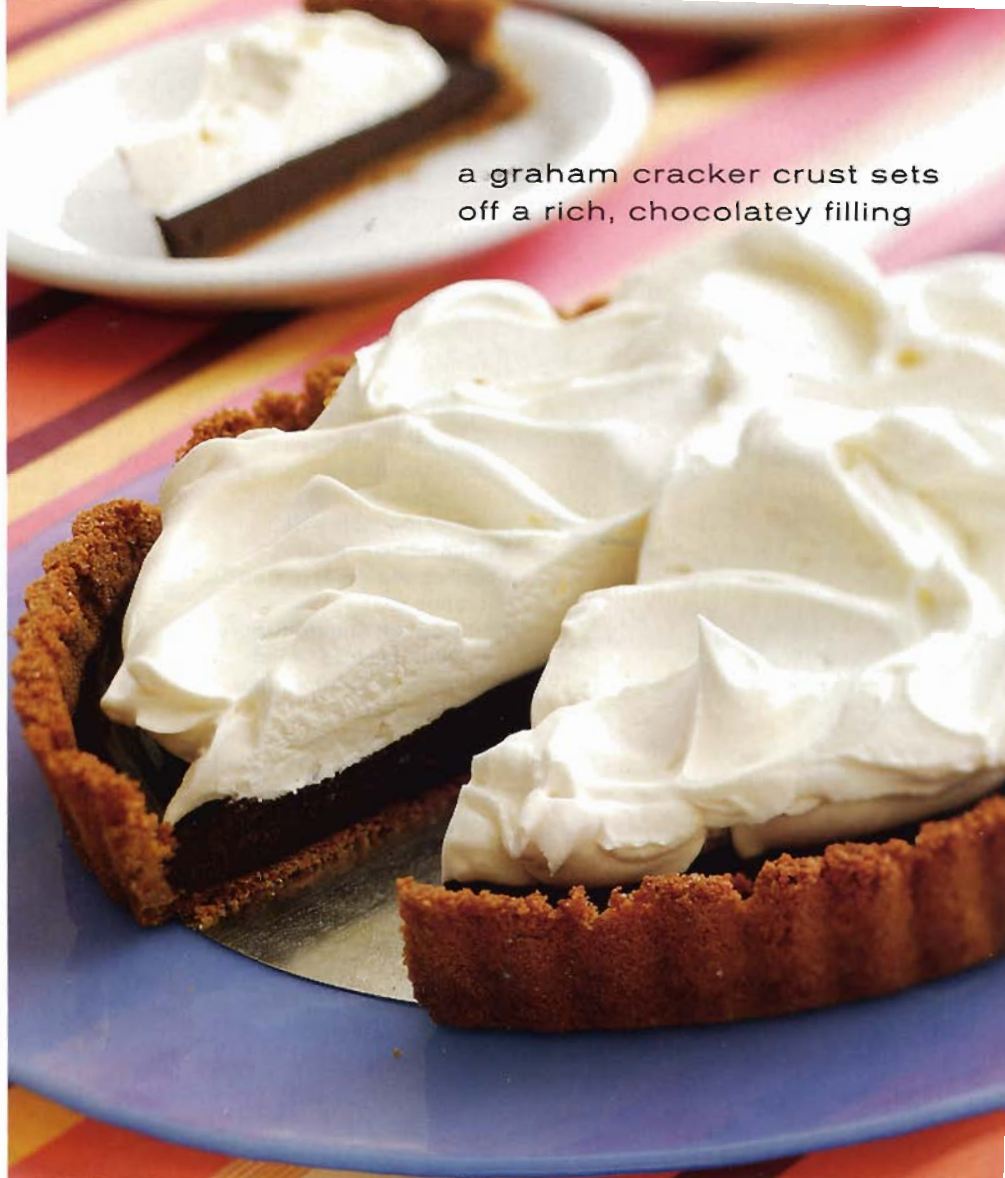




**TIP:** To remove a tart from the pan, set the pan on a wide can and let the outside ring fall away. If it's stubborn, grip the ring with your fingers to coax it off. Slide a long, thin metal spatula between the pan base and the crust and ease the tart onto a flat serving plate.



a graham cracker crust sets off a rich, chocolatey filling

### Excellent Chocolate Truffle Tart with Whipped Vanilla Mascarpone Topping

*Yields one 9½-inch tart; serves twelve to sixteen.*

**FOR THE FILLING:**  
12 ounces bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped  
1 cup whole milk  
2 ounces (¼ cup) unsalted butter, cut into 4 pieces  
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract  
¼ teaspoon table salt

1 Press-In Cookie Crust (see the recipe on p. 51), baked and cooled (I like graham cracker for this tart)

**FOR THE TOPPING:**  
½ pound mascarpone cheese, at room temperature  
¾ cup heavy cream  
¼ cup granulated sugar  
½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

**Make the filling:** Melt together the chocolate, milk, and butter in a medium bowl in a microwave or in a double boiler over medium heat. (For information on how to melt chocolate, see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 70). Add the vanilla and salt. Whisk the mixture until well blended and smooth. Set aside, whisking occasionally, until room temperature and slightly thickened, about 1 hour. (For faster cooling, refrigerate the filling until thickened to a pudding consistency, about 30 minutes, whisking and scraping the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula every 5 minutes.)

With a rubber spatula, scrape the mixture into the crust and spread evenly, taking care not to disturb the edge of the crust. Let cool completely, cover, and refrigerate until the filling is set, about 4 hours and up to 8 hours before proceeding with the recipe.

**Make the topping:** In a medium bowl, combine the mascarpone, cream, sugar, and vanilla. Using an electric mixer, beat on low speed until almost smooth, 30 to 60 seconds. Increase the speed to medium high and beat until the mixture is thick and holds firm peaks, another 30 to 60 seconds. Don't overbeat.

With a rubber or metal spatula, spread the topping over the chocolate filling, leaving lots of swirls and peaks. Serve the tart right away or cover loosely and refrigerate, in the pan, for up to 4 hours.

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*Abigail Johnson Dodge, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, has written several cookbooks. Her latest book is The Weekend Baker. ♦*

mix in the butter



**TIP:** If you don't have a food processor, put the cookies in a zip-top bag and crush them with a rolling pin.

## MASTER RECIPE

# Press-In Cookie Crusts

*Yields one crust for one 9½-inch tart.*

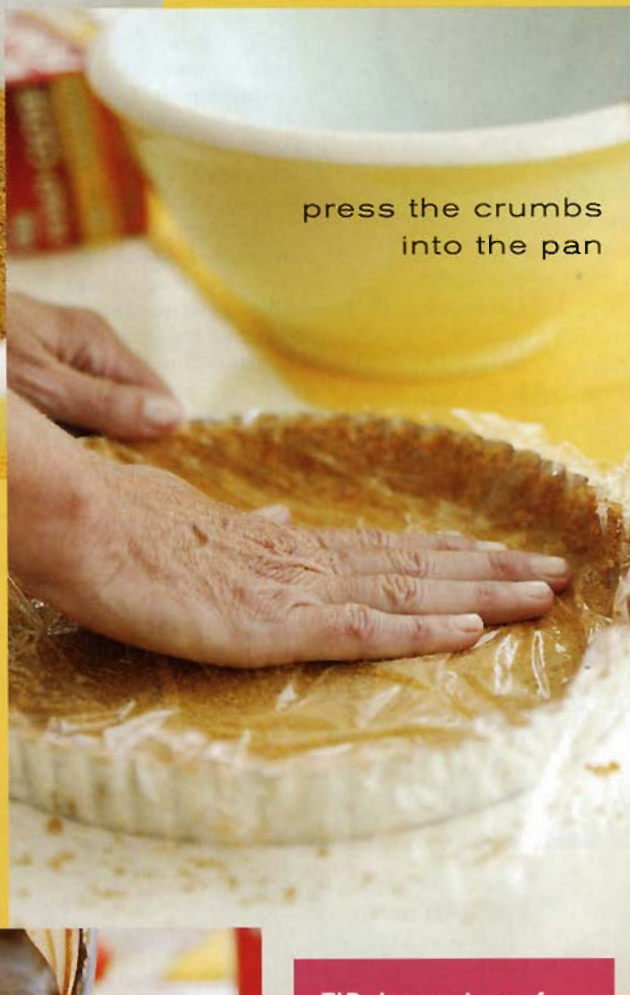
**1 cup finely ground cookies** (ground in a food processor); choose one from the following: about 25 chocolate wafers, 8 whole graham crackers, or 35 vanilla wafers (I like Nabisco Famous Chocolate Wafers, Honey Maid Grahams, and Nilla Vanilla Wafers)  
**2 tablespoons granulated sugar**  
**1½ ounces (3 tablespoons) unsalted butter, melted**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Have ready an ungreased 9½-inch fluted tart pan with a removable bottom.

In a medium bowl, mix the cookie crumbs and sugar with a fork until well blended. Drizzle the melted butter over the crumbs and mix with the fork or your fingers until the crumbs are evenly moistened. Put the crumbs in the tart pan and use your hands to spread the crumbs so that they coat the bottom of the pan and start to climb the sides. Use your fingers to pinch and press some of the crumbs around the inside edge of the pan to cover the sides evenly and create a wall about a scant ¼ inch thick. Redistribute the remaining crumbs evenly over the bottom of the pan and press firmly to make a compact layer. (I like to use a metal measuring cup with straight sides and a flat base for this task.)

Bake the crust until it smells nutty and fragrant (crusts made with lighter-colored cookies will brown slightly), about 10 minutes. Set the baked crust on a rack and let cool. The crust can be made up to one day ahead and stored at room temperature, wrapped well in plastic.

press the crumbs into the pan



**TIP:** Lay a piece of plastic wrap over the crumbs as you spread them so they won't stick to your hands.

bake and cool, then fill

