

*I take no blame for the completely underwhelming, 1950s-ish title on this piece. Apparently even headline editors have bad days.*



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to pronounce, it does look pretty straightforward. I decide to give it a try. (For the recipe Hillary gamely suggests making your own yogurt. Clearly I am not her target audience. I immediately substitute the word "Stonyfield" for that part. Sorry, Hillary).

I take inventory, purchase what is needed (substituting, with Hillary's blessing, Parmesan cheese for the seven-syllable alternative), and line it all up on the counter. I need to crumble the feta cheese. It occurs to me that feta cheese comes already crumbled – why am I attacking this cheese with a fork and fingers when I could have bought it in little pieces already? I growl. I tell myself that pre-crumbled feta probably has something awful in it to keep it from sticking together. I don't know this, but it makes me feel better about this annoying step.

I get out a whisk, and beat together all that is in the bowl. I am foolishly wearing white, indicative of my lack of planning or misplaced optimism. Of course chefs wear white, but they seem to be able to keep whatever they are whisking inside the bowl. My dog covers for my mishaps, lapping the floor, clearly approving of the ingredients so far. Are there people who cook without a dog to help them clean up? I don't know them.

The concoction in front of me looks a bit suspect to me. How can this colorless paste make something as gorgeous as what is pictured? And with all these soft ingredients, won't the finished product end up tasting like mush? These questions are purely rhetorical, since I have no more interest in food chemistry than I do in cooking. I immediately dismiss these foreboding thoughts because I am feeling the pressure – I need something impressive, I need something that calls for a minimum amount of hair-pulling, and I need something fast. If this doesn't work I'll have to resort to plan B, which currently does not exist.

I review the directions. I don't seem to have left anything out, so I can at least congratulate myself on that. Now it's time for the part of cooking that is not listed on any recipe – the cross-your-fingers part. Real cooks don't need that step, I know, but for the rest of us it's the most essential one.

About 30 minutes later (fifteen minutes earlier than the recipe calls for, but my ancient oven sets its own temperature) I pull out a yogurt pie that looks, well, it looks like the picture. I'm a bit stunned. I'm afraid to cut into it, but when I do (because sampling before guests come is de rigeur when you have my kind of track record) I am amazed. It tastes great. So great, in fact, that my friends may think I can actually cook.

So having a springtime party was not such a bad idea after all. In fact, it was a lot of fun, with good friends and good food. And about that mistake I made, inviting eight friends over? I can't wait to make the same mistake twice.

[Reprint of Greek Yogurt Cheese and Onion Pie recipe included in published article]