Have a pie-tastic Thanksgiving!

If your favorite part of Thanksgiving dinner is the pie, try one of these fun party ideas to make digging in extra-special!

1. Have an after-dinner pie contest!
   Pie contests are a hot new trend at fund-raisers and culinary competitions—and the perfect finale to your Thanksgivng feast! Here's how to do it:
   - Spread the word! A week or so before Turkey Day, ask everyone coming to your house to bring along their favorite pie for your friendly competition. Also, mention it to other friends and neighbors who might want to drop by after their own celebrations and join the fun.
   - Stock up on supplies! You'll need scorecards, prizes and labels to identify each pie. Or pick up the new "Pie Contest in a Box" by pie expert Gina Hyams, which includes everything you need ($10.48 at Amazon.com).
   - Decide on your rules! When you extend your invite, specify whether pies have to be 100% homemade, or if it's okay to use a pre-made crust. Also, decide if you want to keep entries anonymous or let everyone take credit for their creations from the get-go.
   - Start the contest! Arrange all pies along a buffet table and give guests a few minutes to ooh and aah. Then cut small slices of each for everyone to sample and judge! (Scorecards should have enough categories—like "best crust" and "prettiest pie"—so everyone can win an award.) Tally scores and announce winners of each category.

2. Mix up a pie cocktail!
   Get the party started with drinks inspired by pecan and Key lime pies! Want to make both recipes? It's easy since each calls for the same main ingredient—vanilla vodka!
   - **Pecan Pie Martini**
     In ice-filled shaker, mix 3/4 cup vanilla vodka (2 oz.), 3 Tbs. pure maple syrup, 2 Tbs. dark rum (1 oz.) and 1/2 tsp. rum extract. Shake vigorously; strain into 2 martini glasses. If desired, before pouring cocktail, dip glass rims in maple syrup, then in finely chopped toasted pecans. Serves 2.
   - **Key Lime Pie Cordials**
     Lightly moisten rims of 2 martini glasses with water, coat with chocolate graham cracker crumbs. In ice-filled shaker, mix 2 oz. vanilla vodka, 1 1/2 oz. rum, 2 oz. Midori melon liqueur, 2 Tbs. lime juice and 2 Tbs. heavy cream. Strain into glasses. Serves 2.

   —Katie Alberts

3. Dig into pie ice cream—or make a pie sundae!
   Treat guests to something they won't be expecting: trendy pie-flavored frozen desserts! There are lots of new ones in the freezer aisle of your grocery store for a limited time, including:
   - Turkey Hill's Baked Apple Dumpling Ice Cream
   - Coconut Cream Pie Ice Cream
   - Southern Lemon Pie Frozen Yogurt
   - Dreyer's Mud Pie Ice Cream
   - Key Lime Pie Yogurt Blends
   - Ben & Jerry's Boston Cream Pie and Peach Cobbler Ice Creams
   - Häagen-Dasz's Blueberry Crumble and Caramel Apple Pie

   Did you know? At the American Pie Council's Crisco National Pie Championships, 1,000 pies are evaluated by 200 judges.

   Prefer classic vanilla? Layer scoops with stewed apples, caramel dripping and crumbled crust for a decadent apple pie sundae!