Apple Pie

Pastry for a double crust pie:
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 tsp salt
1 cup butter or shortening (or a combo), cold
1/2 cup cold water, plus extra if needed

Filling:
2-3 lbs - about 6 large apples (Ambrosia, Pink Lady, Jonagold, Granny Smith and other tart apples work well)
lemon juice (optional — about a tablespoon, or half a lemon)
1/2-3/4 cup sugar, white or brown or a combination (I use a little more if my apples are very tart)
2 Tbsp all-purpose flour
1 tsp cinnamon
cream, for brushing (optional)

In a bowl, stir together the flour and salt. Slice in the the butter or shortening with a small knife or grate it in with the coarse side of a box grater and use a fork or pastry blender to blend the mixture until it resembles coarse breadcrumbs, with lumps of fat no bigger than a blueberry.

Drizzle the water over the mixture and stir until the dough comes together, adding a little more a bit at a time if you need it. It might look dry, but sometimes you can't quite tell until you get in there with your hands.

Gather the dough into a ball, divide it in half, making one slightly bigger than the other, flatten each into a disc, wrap in plastic and let rest for half an hour. (At this point your pastry could be chilled for a few days, or frozen for up to 6 months; thaw it on the countertop when you need it.)

When you're ready to bake, preheat the oven to 400˚F. On a lightly floured surface, roll the larger piece of pastry out into a 12-inch circle. Gently transfer it to a pie plate and fit it into the bottom, without stretching it, letting the edge hang over.

Peel, core and slice the apples into a large bowl and toss them with a squeeze of lemon juice. Sprinkle the sugar, flour and cinnamon over the apples, and toss them well to coat. Pour the apples into the pie shell, mounding them in the middle. Roll out the second piece of dough and lay it over the apples, pressing around the edges to seal. Trim away the excess dough and crimp the edges, and cut a few slits in the top with a knife to allow steam to escape. If you like, brush the top of the pie with a bit of cream right before baking.

Place the pie on a baking sheet (to catch any drips) and bake for 20 minutes. Reduce the temperature to 350°F and bake for another 30-40 minutes, until the crust is golden

and the apples are tender. If the crust is browning too quickly, cover it loosely with a piece of foil. Cool the pie on a wire rack and serve warm, at room temperature, or cold. Serves 8.