



Velvet Knives

I think there are more women than men who resemble this type. Maybe because men negotiate better and they're used to being direct. People I call the "velvet knives" smile constantly. They weasel people into thinking they're sweet and innocent, when in fact they're as deadly as black widow spiders. They backstab and cause huge problems.

Malicious, evil people do exist. These are the clients who usually pick people who are new in business and naïve. They prey on eager beavers who will do almost anything to please. In order to negotiate the price of a job down, they either lie or look for some very small things to find wrong and then insist that they'll sue if they don't get a better deal. Iron-clad contracts rarely help with people like this. Their reputations precede them too. Usually a little careful investigation can save future headaches.

Innocent new people in business can be financially hurt, lose jobs, or wind up with lawsuits because they signed a non-compete agreement without fully realizing the consequences—scary. Be wary of the smiling boss who tries to get you to sign any documents without your attorney's review. Great companies keep their best and brightest without dubious methods. In an office environment, velvet knives are politically astute, dangerous, and can often be threatened by eager, ambitious, hard-working people. Caution. Again, they appear to be incredibly helpful to the top brass, while at the same time losing electronic files of yours, or scheduling appointments but telling you a different time so you're late or miss the event entirely.

This type is different from someone who is passive-aggressive. Usually people can change passive-aggressive behavior once they get a distinction, and they are taught how to communicate directly. Velvet knives have serious character flaws.

Most of the time, good triumphs over bad—it seems to take forever and I often don't have patience. So I leave. Sweet potato pies have often fooled me. Usually, they're not a sweet dessert but some orange vegetable side dish made with orange yams and served at a Thanksgiving meal. I'm not fond of them, as I like my yams with butter and salt and pepper. However, Lemon Sweet Potato Pie is most definitely a dessert worthy of front and center! One of my all-time favorites.



Lemon Sweet Potato Pie

Ingredients

5-6 New Jersey yellow sweet potatoes
1 cup salted butter, softened
1½ cups sugar
4 large eggs, any color
½ cup whiskey (*I use Bourbon*)
Grated lemon rind (*do not use white pith*)
Juice of one fresh lemon
½ teaspoon ground mace
1 unbaked 10" pie shell, homemade preferred

Supplies

Glass 10" pie plate

Note: *I buy and bake extra sweet potatoes and freeze pulp for future summer pies.*

You must use ONLY New Jersey yellow sweet potatoes and they usually only appear around Thanksgiving or Christmas. (Don't substitute orange or yams. Sweet potatoes are yellow or orange with thin skins. Yams have a brown or black scaly skin and off-white, purple, or red flesh. TOTALLY different taste, texture, and color between the two.)

Preheat oven to 450°.

Bake sweet potatoes until soft in the skin. Let cool. Remove the pulp from the sweet potatoes and mash it. There should be 2 cups. In a bowl, use a KitchenAid mixer to cream together butter and sugar until the mixture is fluffy. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then stir in the mashed sweet potatoes, whiskey, grated rind, lemon juice and mace. Pour the mixture into the pie shell.

Reduce oven to 425°.

Bake the pie in the bottom third of a preheated oven (425°) for 20 minutes. Reduce the heat to 350°. Transfer the pie to the middle shelf and bake it for 40-45 minutes more or until the crust is browned and the filling set. Let the pie cool on a rack, then refrigerate, and sift confectioner's sugar over it just before serving.