Preheat oven to 300 °F.

Place all bread slices on a sheet pan. Place the pan in the oven, middle rack, and bake for 12 minutes to dry the bread out. Note: if you are using stale bread, skip this step.

Using a food processor, pulse the bread into fine crumbs.

Transfer the bread crumbs into a mixing bowl. Drizzle the melted butter over the crumbs. Sprinkle the sugar and salt over the crumbs. Stir with a spoon until all ingredients are combined.

Set the bread crumb mixture aside.

Position oven rack into the middle and preheat oven to 400 °F.

In a large bowl, toss the apple slices, brown sugar, cinnamon, and salt together in a large bowl.

Melt the butter, over medium heat, in a 10-inch cast iron skillet. Note: If you don’t have a cast iron skillet, you can substitute any other oven safe skillet of similar size.

Once the butter has melted in the skillet, add the apple mixture, cover, and cook until the apples soften slightly, stirring occasionally, approximately 5 minutes.

Mix the apple cider, cornstarch, and lemon juice in a mixing bowl using a whisk until no lumps remain. Add this cider mixture to the skillet. Keep the skillet over medium heat until the liquid starts to simmer. Stir occasionally, for about 2 minutes, until the sauce has thickened.

Remove the skillet from heat. Gently press the apples with a spoon until they form an even layer across the entire skillet.

Transfer the previously prepared crumb topping evenly over the entire skillet of apples.

Once the crumb topping has been added, bake at 400 °F until the crust just starts to brown; about 10 minutes.

Carefully remove the skillet from the oven and, using a large spoon or spatula, press the crust down into the apple mixture. Do this in the middle first. Then a few times (4-5) around the outer edge, until a majority of the crust has been pressed down. This process is called “dowdying”.

Put the skillet back into the oven and continue to bake for another 15 minutes; or until the crust is golden brown.

Carefully remove the skillet from the oven and place on a wire rack or trivet. Allow the apple pandowdy to cool for at least 20 minutes.

Once cooled, scoop the apple pandowdy from the skillet with a serving spoon. Serve on a small plate, or in a bowl, with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.