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BAKING GUIDE

Recipes, Tips
& Techniques
*from cooks
like you!*



tasteofhome

BAKING GUIDE

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Chocolate Velvet Dessert, p. 35

Bakers, start your ovens. This is your time to shine!

Want to serve your family a parade of classic made-at-home bakery pleasures that taste just as delectable and comforting as Mom's? Good news! You don't have to be a culinary overachiever to bake like a pro. Whipping up fresh-from-the-oven creations has never been easier or more fun, and it only requires two basic ingredients: a little love (you know you've got it!) and a little baking know-how. That's where we come in.

With the deliciously fun and information-packed *Taste of Home Baking Guide* in hand, you now have all the recipes, best-kept secrets and tricks of the trade to help you bake up a big batch of from-scratch goodness. We had YOU in mind when we assembled this collection. Since we couldn't be in the kitchen with you, we put together this handy instructional guide to arm you with everything you need to create your best baked wonders.

In need of a something small and scrumptious for next week's bake sale? We've got you covered. Turn to our Cookies, Bars & Brownies section, and you'll have a batch of bite-sized wonders warm and ready before your kid can lick the batter off the beaters.

Maybe you're craving a slice of sweet, flaky perfection. In our Pies & Tarts section, you'll find bubbly, fruit-filled classics as well as silky, cream-filled delights. There's also advice on making foolproof pastry dough for a trademark golden crust.

Want an impressive dessert for a dinner party with friends? Just flip to our Cakes or Cheesecakes sections, and we'll show you how easy it is to create the perfect finale one step at a time. Once guests take that first sweet bite, your inner baker will be standing at the podium, awaiting her gold medal.

The fun doesn't end there. You'll also discover a treasure trove of enticing ideas for breads, rolls, quick breads, muffins, scones, biscuits, coffee cakes, sweet rolls and more! The following features will have you pulling out this handy little guide for years to come:

Baking Basics

It all starts with the basics—measuring and mixing techniques, tips for purchasing appliances and bakeware, an explanation of common baking terms and more! If you're new to baking, you'll find this information indispensable. If you're more experienced, it will be a great refresher course.

Step-by-Step Instructions

We've taken the guesswork out of baking by breaking down the recipe directions and how-to features into numbered steps. It's like having your own personal Taste of Home Test Kitchen professional guide you along the way!

Dozens of Tips

Baking success is yours with the wealth of handy tips packed inside this guide. These tricks of the trade make even the most over-the-top recipe as easy as pie.

Handy How-To Photos

Some baking techniques are a little more involved. Don't sweat it! We've packed this guide with how-to photos that clearly demonstrate certain techniques.

Colorful Photos

We know you're more likely to make a recipe if you see a photo of the finished product so we've included rich, full-color photos for visual inspiration.

Guaranteed-to-be-Good Recipes

As is true with all our Taste of Home family of magazines, this guide's 55 foolproof recipes have been shared by family cooks just like you, and each one has been tested and approved by our Test Kitchen experts. So you can bake with confidence knowing each item will be a winner!

Let the *Taste of Home Baking Guide* be your inspiration for creating unforgettable pleasures when you want to show your family some lovin' from the oven. With tried-and-true recipes, time-saving tips and helpful how-to instructions, this essential guide makes baking a breeze!

Here's a sneak peek of the types of baked indulgences you'll find within this guide.

How sweet is that?



Java Cream Puffs

Holy scrumptious! An indulgent mocha-flavored filling takes these old-fashioned wonders from ordinary to extraordinary. Try one and see for yourself.

IOLA EGLE BELLA VISTA, ARKANSAS

PREP: 25 MIN. + CHILLING

BAKE: 30 MIN. + COOLING

YIELD: 8 SERVINGS

½ cup water
¼ cup butter, cubed
⅛ teaspoon salt
½ cup all-purpose flour
2 eggs
¼ cup finely chopped pecans
MOCHA CREAM FILLING:
½ cup strong brewed coffee
24 large marshmallows
1½ cups heavy whipping cream
¼ cup hot fudge ice cream topping, warmed

1. In a large saucepan, bring water, butter and salt to a boil. Add flour all at once and stir until a smooth ball forms. Remove from the heat; let stand for 5 minutes. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Continue beating until mixture is smooth and shiny. Stir in pecans.
2. Drop by rounded tablespoonfuls 3 in. apart onto a greased baking sheet. Bake at 400° for 30-35 minutes or until golden brown. Remove to a wire rack. Immediately split puffs open; remove tops and set aside. Discard soft dough from inside. Allow puffs to cool.
3. For filling, in a large saucepan, combine coffee and marshmallows. Cook over low heat until the marshmallows are melted. Remove from the heat. Transfer to a bowl; cover and chill just until thickened.
4. In a large bowl, beat cream until soft peaks form. Whisk the chilled coffee mixture until light in color; fold in whipped cream. Just before serving, fill each puff with about ¼ cup filling. Replace tops and drizzle with fudge topping.



Baking Basics

Secrets for Successful Baking

- Read the entire recipe before you begin. Make sure you understand the cooking techniques.
- Check to see that you have all the ingredients required for the recipe.
- Prepare the ingredients before you start mixing. Let the butter soften, toast the coconut, chop the nuts, etc.
- Measure the ingredients correctly, using the proper techniques and measuring utensils.
- Prepare the recipe according to directions. It's best to use the baking pan or dish called for in the recipe.
- Preheat the oven before baking.
- Use a kitchen timer to accurately time the recipe. If you use a pan size other than the one called for in the recipe, you may need to adjust the baking time.
- Use an oven thermometer to verify the accuracy of your oven. Preheat the oven to the desired temperature. Place thermometer on the center rack. Close the oven door and leave the oven on at the set temperature. Keep the thermometer in the oven for 15 minutes, then check. If the thermometer does not agree with the set oven temperature, the oven temperature is inaccurate. Adjust the oven temperature accordingly.
- Cool baked goods on a wire rack to allow air to circulate around the food.

Measuring Tools

To ensure good and consistent baking results, every cook needs to know how to accurately and correctly measure ingredients. Not all measuring cups are the same and not all ingredients are measured in the same manner.

- A liquid measuring cup is available in either clear glass or transparent plastic with a handle and a pour spout. They come in 1-cup, 2-cup, 4-cup and 8-cup sizes. Liquid measures are used for milk, honey, molasses, corn syrup, water and oil.
- A dry measuring cup is made from metal or plastic and has a handle. The food to be measured should be even with the rim of the cup. Dry measuring cups usually come in a set with ¼-cup, ⅓-cup, ½-cup and 1-cup sizes. Some sets may have additional sizes such as ⅛ cup or ⅔ cup. Dry measures are used for flour and sugar. They also are used to measure shortening, sour cream, yogurt and applesauce. While these ingredients are not “dry,” they can mound when measured. The dry measure allows you to level the ingredient at the top of the cup for an accurate measurement.
- Standard measuring spoons are used to measure both liquid and dry ingredients. Measuring spoon sets include a ¼ teaspoon, ½ teaspoon, 1 teaspoon and 1 tablespoon. Some sets are available with a ⅛ teaspoon.

Proper Measuring Techniques



1 Measuring Liquids

Place liquid measuring cup on a level surface. For a traditional liquid measuring cup, view the amount at eye level to be sure of an accurate measure. Do not lift cup to check the level. Some newer liquid measuring cups are designed so that they can be accurately read from above.

For sticky liquids such as molasses, corn syrup or honey, spray the measuring cup with cooking spray before adding the liquid. This will make it easier to pour out the liquid and clean the cup.

2 Measuring Dry Ingredients

For dry ingredients such as flour, sugar or cornmeal, spoon ingredients into a dry measuring cup over a canister or waxed paper. Fill cup to overflowing, then level by sweeping a metal spatula or flat side of a knife across the top.

3 Measuring Bulk Dry Ingredients

Spoon bulky dry ingredients such as cranberries, raisins, chocolate chips or oats into the measuring cup. If necessary, level the top with a spatula or flat side of knife.

4 Measuring Brown Sugar

Since brown sugar has a unique moist texture, it needs to be packed into a dry measuring cup. Firmly press brown sugar into the cup with your fingers or the back of a spoon. Level with the rim of the cup.

Brown sugar should hold the shape of the cup when it is turned out.

5 Measuring Sour Cream and Yogurt

Spoon sour cream and yogurt into a dry measuring cup, then level top by sweeping a metal spatula or flat side of a knife across the top of the cup.

6 Measuring Shortening

Press shortening into a dry measuring cup with a spatula to make sure it is solidly packed without air pockets. With a metal spatula or flat side of a knife, level with the rim. Some shortenings come in sticks and may be measured like butter (see below).

7 Measuring Butter

The wrappers for sticks of butter come with markings for tablespoons, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. Use a knife to cut off the desired amount.

8 Using Measuring Spoons

For dry ingredients such as flour, sugar or spices, heap the ingredient into the spoon over a canister or waxed paper. With a metal spatula or the flat side of a knife, level with the rim of the spoon.

For shortening or butter, spread into spoon and level off. For liquids, pour into measuring spoon over a bowl or custard cup. Never measure over the batter, because some may spill and you may end up with too much in the batter.



Bakeware

Stocking Your Kitchen with Bakeware

A well-stocked kitchen should have the following items for baking:

1. 9-in. x 1½-in. round baking pan (two to three)
2. 13-in. x 9-in. baking pan and/or dish (3 qt.)
3. 10-in. fluted tube pan
4. 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan (jelly-roll pan)
5. Baking sheets (with only 1 or 2 sides) in assorted sizes
6. 9-in. springform pan
7. 9-in. pie plate
8. 12-cup muffin pan (standard size)
9. 6-oz. custard cups (set of six)
10. 9-in. x 5-in. loaf pan (two) and 8-in. x 4-in. loaf pan (two)

11. 9-in. and 8-in. square baking dishes and/or pans
12. 10-in. tube pan

These other items are also convenient to have on hand:

- 11-in. x 7-in. baking pan and/or dish (2 qt.)
- 9-in. deep-dish pie plate
- 9-in. fluted tart pan with removable bottom
- 10-in. springform pan
- 5¾-in. x 3-in. x 2-in. loaf pan (three to four)
- Miniature muffin pans
- 10-oz. custard cups (set of six)
- 8-in. fluted tube pan



Choosing Bakeware

The recipes in this book call for standard-size baking pans and baking dishes. For best results, use the pan size called for in the recipe. However, we list some practical substitutions (see chart below).

Baking pans are made of metal. Aluminum pans with dull finishes give the best overall baking results. Pans with dark finishes often cook and brown foods more quickly. If you use pans with dark finishes, you may need to adjust the baking time and cover tops of baked goods with foil to prevent overbrowning. Insulated pans generally take longer to bake and brown foods.

Baking dishes are made of ovenproof glass or ceramic. If you substitute a glass baking dish in a recipe calling for a metal baking pan, reduce the oven temperature by 25° to avoid overbaking and overbrowning.

To measure your bakeware's diameter, length or width, use a ruler and measure from one inside top edge to the opposite inside top edge. To measure the height, place a ruler on the outside of the dish and measure from the bottom to a top edge. For volume, fill the pan or dish full to the rim with water.



If you don't have this pan(s):

use this pan(s) instead:

One 9-in. x 5-in. loaf pan	Three 5¾-in. x 3-in. x 2-in. loaf pans
One 8-in. x 4-in. loaf pan	Two 5¾-in. x 3-in. x 2-in. loaf pans
One 9-in. round baking pan	One 8-in. square baking dish
Two 9-in. round baking pans	One 13-in. x 9-in. baking pan
One 10-in. fluted tube pan	One 10-in. tube pan or two 9-in. x 5-in. loaf pan
One 13-in. x 9-in. baking pan	Two 9-in. round baking pans or two 8-in. square baking dishes

Mixing Tools & Appliances

When baking, it's handy to have a variety of kitchen tools and appliances to make the job easier. Here are a few essentials for a well-stocked kitchen:

- Mixing bowls
- Food processor
- Mixer (stand)
- Blender
- Mixer (portable)
- Measuring cups (dry and liquid)
- Sieve
- Juicer
- Timers
- Rolling pin
- Wire racks
- Pastry brushes
- Spatulas (rubber or plastic)
- Dough cutter/scraper
- Metal spatula
- Wire whisk
- Measuring spoons
- Grater
- Wooden spoons
- Pastry blender
- Pastry bag and tips



Common Baking Ingredients

Chocolate

Chocolate is one of the most popular flavorings in baked goods. It comes from cocoa beans, which are processed to produce cocoa powder, cocoa butter and chocolate liquor (the liquid created when the meat of the cocoa bean “nibs” are crushed). The various forms and flavors of chocolate products are a combination of these and other ingredients. For best results, we recommend using the type of chocolate listed in the recipe.

Baking cocoa is the powdery residue that remains after the cocoa butter is removed from the chocolate liquor. This form of chocolate contains the least amount of fat. Dutch-processed cocoa has been treated during processing with an alkalizing agent, which produces a smoother flavor and darker color than untreated baking cocoa.

Chocolate chips are available in standard, mini and larger “chunk” sizes. They come in semisweet, milk and vanilla (also called white baking chips). Specialty flavors such as mint are also available.

Chocolate syrup is a liquid made from cocoa, corn syrup and flavorings.

German sweet chocolate comes in a bar and is a sweeter chocolate than semisweet.

Milk chocolate contains cocoa butter, sugar, vanilla, chocolate liquor and 12% milk solids. It is available in chips and candy bars.

Semisweet and bittersweet chocolate can be used interchangeably. Bittersweet chocolate is less sweet than semisweet chocolate. Semisweet chocolate is made with chocolate liquor, additional cocoa butter, sugar and vanilla. It is available in 1-ounce squares, chips and candy bars.

Unsweetened chocolate may also be referred to as baking chocolate. It is solidified chocolate liquor and does not contain sugar. It is available in packages of 1-ounce squares.

White chocolate is not a true chocolate because it does not contain chocolate liquor. White chocolate is made with cocoa butter, sugar, milk solids and vanilla. It is available in packages of 1-ounce squares and chips.

Storing Chocolate

Store chocolate tightly wrapped in a cool, dry place. If stored improperly, its appearance will change. When chocolate is stored at too warm a temperature, a fat bloom occurs, causing grayish-white streaks or blotches. When chocolate is stored in a damp place, a sugar bloom occurs, giving it a rough feel. You can still melt chocolate with blooms and add it into batter or dough for baked goods.

Melting Chocolate

Break or chop large pieces of chocolate so it will melt more evenly. Melt chocolate in a dry, heavy saucepan over low heat and stir until smooth. Even small amounts of water will cause the chocolate to seize (become thick and lumpy), making it unusable. If the chocolate needs to set up after melting (such as when it's used for dipping or garnishes), add $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of shortening for every 6 ounces of chocolate.

To melt chocolate in the microwave, place chocolate in a microwave-safe bowl. Melt semisweet chocolate at 100% power, and milk chocolate and white chocolate at 70% power. Stir frequently until the chocolate is melted; do not overheat.



Dairy Products

Dairy products add moisture to baked goods. They also impart flavor and tenderness and aid in browning.

Buttermilk is made by adding a bacteria to fat-free or reduced-fat milk. The result is a tangy flavor and a slightly thicker consistency. Buttermilk was originally the low-fat liquid that remained when cream was churned into butter.

Evaporated milk is whole milk with 60% of the water removed and contains about 7.9% milk fat. An unopened can of evaporated milk is shelf stable. Do not substitute evaporated milk for sweetened condensed milk. Reduced-fat and fat-free evaporated milks are also available.

Fat-free milk, also called skim or nonfat milk, contains no more than $\frac{1}{2}$ % milk fat.

Half-and-half cream is a blend of whole milk and cream that contains from 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ % to 18% milk fat.

Heavy whipping cream contains at least 36% milk fat. When whipped, it should double in volume and hold stiff peaks.

Nonfat dry milk powder is fat-free milk with all the moisture removed. It is reconstituted with water.

Reduced-fat milk has 2% milk fat.

Sour cream is half-and-half cream that has been soured by using a lactic acid-producing bacteria or acidifiers. It has a tangy flavor and a thick texture.

Sweetened condensed milk is made from whole milk with about 50% of the water removed and has added sugar. It is a thick, sweet product. An unopened can of sweetened condensed milk is shelf stable. Don't use sweetened condensed milk as a substitute for evaporated milk. Reduced-

fat and fat-free sweetened condensed milks are also available.

Whole milk has about 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ % milk fat.

Yogurt is made from whole, reduced-fat or fat-free milk. The milk is fermented with lactic acid-producing bacteria. It has a tangy flavor and a thick texture.

Eggs

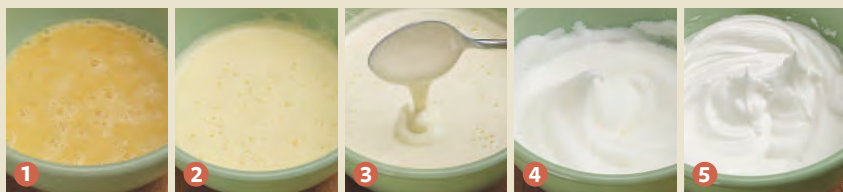
Eggs perform many functions for baked goods. They add color, flavor, texture (give a tender crumb), structure and leavening help. Egg yolks add fat and act as an emulsifier, which helps blend the shortening or oil into the liquid ingredients. Egg whites are used for their drying properties, especially for meringues.

Refrigerate eggs as soon as possible after purchase. Store eggs in their carton on an inside refrigerator shelf. The carton cushions the eggs and helps prevent moisture loss and odor adsorption. Use eggs by their expiration date.

Use only recipes in which the eggs are completely cooked. Eggs are thoroughly cooked when they reach a temperature of 160°. For food safety reasons, do not leave eggs at room temperature for over 2 hours.

Egg substitutes are available in cartons in the frozen and refrigerated sections of grocery stores. Egg substitutes use egg whites and contain no cholesterol and little or no fat. One-fourth cup of egg substitute is equal to one egg. Do not use egg substitute for items such as cream puffs, popovers and sponge cakes. Generally, it is best to use egg substitutes for only a portion of the eggs called for in the recipe.





Beating Eggs

1 Lightly beaten

Beat the egg with a fork until the yolk and white are combined.

2 Lemon-colored

Beat eggs with an electric mixer on high speed for about 5 minutes. The volume of the beaten eggs will increase, the texture will go from liquid to thick and foamy, and the color will be a light yellow.

Separating Eggs

Place an egg separator over a custard cup; crack egg into the separator. As each egg is separated, place yolk in another bowl and empty egg whites into a bowl. It is easier to separate eggs when they are cold.



Egg Size Equivalents

The recipes in this cookbook were tested with large eggs. The following are some guidelines for substituting other size eggs for large eggs.

1 LARGE EGG	= 1 jumbo;	1 extra large;	1 medium
2 LARGE EGGS	= 2 jumbo;	2 extra large;	2 medium; 3 small
3 LARGE EGGS	= 2 jumbo;	3 extra large;	3 medium; 4 small
4 LARGE EGGS	= 3 jumbo;	4 extra large;	5 medium; 5 small
5 LARGE EGGS	= 4 jumbo;	4 extra large;	6 medium; 7 small
6 LARGE EGGS	= 5 jumbo;	5 extra large;	7 medium; 8 small

3 Thick and pale yellow

Beat eggs and sugar with an electric mixer on high speed for about 7-8 minutes or until mixture has thickened and turned a very pale yellow. Mixture will fall in ribbons from a spoon.

4 Soft peaks

Beat egg whites with an electric mixer on medium speed until they are thick and white. To test for soft peaks, lift the beaters from the whites—the egg white peaks should curl down.

For best results, make sure the bowl and beaters are free from oil and the egg whites contain no specks of yolk. Both will prevent the whites from reaching full volume.

5 Stiff peaks

Continue beating the egg whites after they have reached the soft-peak stage with an electric mixer on high speed until the volume increases more and they are thicker. To test for stiff peaks, lift the beaters from the whites—the egg white peaks should stand straight up and, if you tilt the bowl, the whites should not slide around.

Softening Butter

When creaming butter, it should be softened. (You should be able to make an indentation in a stick of butter with your finger and a table knife will be able to glide through it.)

When butter is cut into a mixture, it generally should be cold from the refrigerator.



Fats

Fats in baked goods can perform many functions—they tenderize, add moisture, carry flavors and provide richness. Fats act as a leavener when creamed because the creaming process incorporates air into the batter or dough. They also help keep baked goods fresh.

Butter adds flavor and may add color. In some recipes (such as shortbread), butter is the main or only flavoring component, and the use of butter is essential to that recipe. Recipes for this cookbook were tested with butter, not margarine.

Margarine is made from a variety of vegetable oils, usually soybean and corn. Not all margarines are alike. They vary in oil content and form. For baking, use stick margarine with an 80% fat content. Margarine with lower fat content, usually labeled as margarine spread or whipped margarine, has more water and air in it and will adversely affect the quality of your baked goods.

Shortening is a solid fat (it holds its shape at room temperature) that is made



from 100% vegetable oils. Shortening is not as temperature-sensitive as butter and margarine, so shortening makes cookies spread less during baking and makes pastries flakier. Regular vegetable shortening adds no flavor to baked goods. Butter-flavored shortening adds flavor and some color.

Oil is most frequently used in cakes to add tenderness and moistness. Because oil cannot be creamed like butter, margarine and shortening, it does not help in leavening. Oil cannot be used interchangeably with solid shortening.

Flours

Flours are made from the finely ground meal of edible grains. Wheat flour, the most commonly used flour, contains gluten—an elastic protein that traps the gases produced by leaveners. The trapped gases push against the protein,



causing the product to rise. During baking, the protein is set by the heat and gives the baked good its structure. The terms soft and hard wheat refer to the amount of protein (gluten) in the flour—soft has less and hard has more. The amount of gluten will affect the texture of the baked product.

Wheat flour will bleach naturally when exposed to air over many weeks. In commercially bleached flour, this whitening process is accelerated with a small amount of bleaching agents. Unbleached flour does not use bleaching agents and may give baked goods an off-white color.

All-purpose flour is a blend of hard (high-gluten) wheat and soft (low-gluten) wheat flours. It is a general-purpose flour, which means it is suitable for all types of baking.

Bread flour is made from hard (high-gluten) wheat and is specifically formulated for yeast breads.

Cake flour is made from soft (low-gluten) wheat and has a fine texture. It gives a tender, delicate crumb to cakes.

Rye flour contains less gluten than wheat flours, such as all-purpose flour, and should be used in combination with wheat flour. Rye flour produces bread with a darker color, denser texture and more distinctive flavor. Medium rye flour is available in most grocery stores, but light and dark rye flours are also sold in specialty markets.

Self-rising flour is all-purpose flour to which salt and baking powder have been added. Self-rising flour is used as a shortcut in some biscuit and cake recipes.

Whole wheat flour, also called graham flour, is a wheat flour that is processed from the entire wheat kernel, which contains the bran and the germ. Whole wheat flour has more fiber, nutrition and fat than all-purpose flour. Because of the fat from the bran and germ, whole wheat flour has a shorter shelf life than white flours. Store whole wheat flour in the refrigerator for up to 6 months.

Leaveners

Leaveners cause your baked goods to rise and to have a light texture. Baking powder, baking soda, yeast and eggs are leavening agents.

Creaming fat also helps leaven baked goods by incorporating air into the batter. The air expands during baking, causing the product to rise. Liquids, such as water,



create steam during baking, which can also cause baked products to rise.

Baking powder is available in single-acting and double-acting varieties. Double-acting baking powder is the most readily available type and is the type used in this cookbook. Double-acting baking powder produces carbon dioxide gas in two stages: when it is mixed with liquid and when it is heated. Single-acting baking powder creates carbon dioxide gas only when it is mixed with liquid. Baking powder can lose its ability to leaven. Discard any baking powder that is past the expiration date on the can.

Baking soda is an alkaline substance used in batters that have acidic ingredients such as buttermilk, molasses and sour cream. When the baking soda is mixed with the acidic ingredient, there is an immediate release of carbon dioxide gas. Batters and doughs that only use baking soda as a leavening agent should be baked immediately. Otherwise, the baked product might not rise as high and the texture won't be as light.

Yeast is a microorganism that becomes activated when combined with warm water and sugar. It consumes the sugars in sweeteners and flours and produces carbon dioxide gas that helps give bread its light, airy texture. There are several different types of yeast, and each is handled differently. Check the expiration date on the package before using, and discard yeast if it is past the date.

- **Active dry yeast** is available in 1/4-ounce foil packages or 4-ounce jars. With the Traditional Mixing Method on page 78, the active yeast is dissolved in liquid that has been warmed to 110° to 115°. If the liquid temperature is too low, the yeast will not be activated. If the liquid temperature is too high, the yeast will be killed, preventing the dough from rising.
- **Quick-rise yeast** is available in 1/4-ounce foil packages or 4-ounce jars. Quick-rise yeast is finely granulated and should only be combined with the other ingredients using the Rapid Mixing Method on page 77. Quick-rise yeast will

raise bread dough in about a third to half the traditional time.

- **Bread machine yeast** is available in 4-ounce jars. This is an instant yeast with finer granules. The smaller granules allow the yeast to mix into the dough more evenly.
- **Fresh or cake yeast** is most commonly available in 2-ounce cakes, which is equivalent to three 1/4-ounce packages of active dry yeast. A third of the fresh yeast cake (about .6 ounce) is equal to one packet of active dry yeast.

Cake yeast is a fresh product found in the grocer's dairy case. It should be used within 10 days of purchase. To use, crumble the yeast into dry ingredients or soften in tepid water (70° to 80°).

Eggs are whipped to incorporate air to create a foam. The incorporated air expands when heated, causing the baked product to rise. Foam cakes, such as angel foods and chiffon, use egg whites as a leavening agent.

Salt

Salt helps round out flavors. In bread making, salt also controls the growth of the yeast. Too much salt in the bread dough will inhibit the growth of the yeast, resulting in a dense loaf.

Sugar and Other Sweeteners

Sugars and other sweeteners perform many functions in baked goods. They tenderize, add sweetness and flavor, promote browning and enhance the keeping quality. Sugar is used in meringues for stability. Sweeteners are used in small amounts to feed the yeast when making bread.



Brown sugar is a combination of granulated sugar and molasses. Available in light and dark, brown sugars can be used interchangeably. Dark brown sugar has more molasses and, therefore, a more distinctive molasses flavor than light brown sugar. Dark brown sugar will also cause the color of the baked good to be slightly darker.

Confectioners' sugar, also known as powdered sugar, is granulated sugar that has been ground into a fine powder and mixed with a little cornstarch to prevent clumping. It is mainly used for frostings and glazes. For smooth frostings without any lumps, sift confectioners' sugar after measuring.

Granulated sugar, also known as sugar or white sugar, is made from refined sugarcane or sugar beets.

Corn syrup is made from corn. It helps keep baked goods moist. It is available in light and dark. Dark corn syrup has caramel color and flavor added, so it will cause baked goods to be darker in color.

Honey adds a distinct flavor and sweetness to baked items and also keeps them moist. Honey's flavor is affected by the type of flowers from which the bees collect nectar. Honey caramelizes at a lower temperature than sugar and may cause baked goods to brown more quickly. It's available in liquid and whipped forms, among others.

Molasses is the by-product of refining sugarcane. It adds sweetness, distinct flavor and color to baked goods. Molasses is available in light, dark and blackstrap. As you would expect, the light has the mildest flavor and the lightest color, and blackstrap has the strongest flavor and darkest color.

Common Baking Terms

Bake—To cook in an oven surrounded by dry heat. When baking, it is important to preheat the oven before placing the food inside.

Batter—A mixture made of flour and a liquid, such as milk. It may also include ingredients such as sugar, butter, shortening or oil, eggs, leaveners and flavorings. The consistency of batters ranges from thin to thick. Thin batters, such as pancakes or cakes, are pourable. Thick batters, such as quick breads or muffins, can be dropped from a spoon.

Beat—To rapidly mix with a spoon, fork, wire whisk or electric mixer.

Blend—To combine several ingredients with a spoon, electric mixer, blender or food processor.

Boil—To heat liquids until bubbles form that cannot be stirred down. In the case of water, the temperature will reach 212° at sea level.

Caramelize—To heat sugar in a skillet or saucepan over low heat until melted and golden brown in color.

Chill—To cool foods to below room temperature (40° or less) by placing in the refrigerator, the freezer or an ice bath.

Chop—To cut foods into ¼-inch to ½-inch pieces.

Coats Spoon—To leave a thin, even, smooth film on the back of a metal spoon. This is one of the doneness tests for stirred custards.

Combine—To place several ingredients in a single bowl or container and thoroughly mix.

Cool—Bring foods to room temperature (about 70°).

Core—To remove the seed area of an apple or pear using a coring tool or a small knife.

Cream—To beat softened butter, margarine or shortening alone or with sugar using a spoon or mixer until light and fluffy.

Crimp—To seal the edge of a double-crust pie by pinching or pressing the bottom and top pastry together with your fingers, fork or other utensil.

Cube—To cut foods into ½-inch to 1-inch square pieces.

Cut In—To break down and distribute cold butter, margarine or shortening into a flour mixture using a pastry blender or two knives.

Dash—A measurement less than ⅛ teaspoon that is used for herbs, spices or hot pepper sauce. This is not an accurate measurement.

Dice—To cut foods into ⅛-inch to ¼-inch cubes.

Dissolve—To stir a solid food with a liquid until none of the solid remains, such as yeast with warm water or gelatin in boiling water.

Dot—To break up small pieces of butter and distribute evenly over the top of pie filling or dough.

Dough—A thick mixture made of flour and a liquid that is not pourable. It may also include ingredients such as sugar, butter, shortening or oil, eggs, leaveners and flavorings. It is stiff enough to be worked with by hand (for example, kneading bread dough).

Drizzle—To slowly spoon or pour a thin stream of icing, melted butter or other liquid.

Dust—To lightly sprinkle confectioners' sugar, baking cocoa or flour.

Egg Wash—A mixture of beaten egg, egg yolk or egg white and water that is brushed over breads, rolls, pastries or pie crusts before baking. Egg washes give the final baked product a shiny, brown finish.

Extracts—The distilled essential oils from plant materials, which are then dissolved in alcohol. Common examples are vanilla and almond.

Flavorings—Chemical compounds that replicate the flavor of a particular food or plant. Flavorings do not originate from the plant material. Common examples are maple, banana and coconut.

Flute—To make a V shape or scalloped edge on a pie crust with your thumb and fingers.

Fold—A method of mixing to combine light or delicate ingredients such as whipped cream or egg whites with other ingredients without beating. A rubber spatula is used to gently cut down through the ingredients, move across the bottom of the bowl and bring up part of the mixture.

Food Coloring—Used to tint foods and is available in liquid, gel or paste.

Frost—To cover a cake, cupcake or cookie with a spreadable frosting.



Glaze—To coat the exterior of sweet or savory foods with a thin, glossy mixture.

Grate—To rub ingredients, such as citrus peel, spices and chocolate, over a grater to produce very fine particles.

Grease—To rub the inside of a baking dish or pan with shortening, butter or oil or to coat with nonstick cooking spray.

Grease and Flour—To rub a thin layer of shortening, butter or oil over the inside of a baking pan or dish and then dust with flour. The excess flour is shaken out of the pan. Cakes baked in round baking pans or fluted tube pans generally require that the pan be greased and floured.

Grind—To transform a solid piece of food into smaller pieces using a food processor, blender or mortar and pestle.

Ice—To spread a thin icing over cakes or cookies.

Jelly Roll—A dessert made by spreading a filling of jelly, cream or whipped cream over a sponge cake baked in a 15-inch x 10-inch x 1-inch pan and rolling into a log. Jelly-roll style is used when any food is filled and rolled into a log shape.

Knead—To work dough by using a pressing and folding action to make it smooth and elastic.

Line—To cover a baking sheet with a piece of parchment paper, waxed paper or foil to prevent sticking.

Marble—To swirl light and dark batters for a cake, bar, pie or cheesecake. The



batters should not be combined into one color; there should still be two distinctive batters after marbling.

Mince—To cut foods into very fine pieces no larger than $\frac{1}{8}$ inch.

Mix—To stir or beat two or more ingredients together with a spoon or a fork until well combined.

Moisten—To add enough liquid to dry ingredients while stirring gently to make a wet but not runny mixture. Often used in the preparation of muffins.

Peel—To remove the skin from fruits and vegetables. Also, the outer portion of a citrus fruit is known as the peel. To remove the peel, use a small, sharp knife, grater, vegetable peeler or zester.

Pinch—A small amount (less than $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon) of a seasoning or spice that is easily held between the thumb and index finger. This is not an accurate measurement.

Pipe—To force a soft mixture, such as whipped cream, frosting or meringue, through a pastry bag and/or tip for a fancy shape or design.

Plump—To soak dried fruit, such as raisins and cherries, in liquid until softened.

Press—Often called a cookie press. Used to form cookie dough into decorative shapes.

Prick—To pierce food or pastry with the tines of a fork to prevent them from bursting or rising during baking.

Proof—To check the quality of yeast before using in bread making. To proof yeast, dissolve yeast and a little sugar in warm water (110° to 115°) and let stand for 5-10 minutes. If the yeast is alive, there will be a thick foam on the surface. To proof also refers to letting yeast dough rise after it's been shaped and before baking.

Punch Down—To use a fist to deflate risen yeast dough after the first rising.

Puree—To mash solid foods into a smooth mixture using a food processor, food mill, blender or sieve.

Refrigerate—To place in the refrigerator to chill.

Rounded Teaspoon or Tablespoon—To mound dough slightly in the measuring spoon.

Score—To make thin slashes on the surface of breads to decorate and to allow steam to escape during baking.

Seize—To become thick and lumpy. Seizing refers to when a small amount of liquid comes in contact with melted chocolate.

Separate—To remove the egg white from the egg yolk.

Sift—To pass dry ingredients, such as confectioners' sugar or flour, through a fine-mesh strainer to remove lumps, add air and combine several dry ingredients.

Soften—To bring butter, margarine or cream cheese to a soft consistency by letting it stand at room temperature for a short time.

Soft Peaks—The stage of beating egg whites or heavy whipping cream when the beater is lifted from the mixture and points of the peaks curl over.

Stiff Peaks—The stage of beating egg whites or heavy whipping cream when the beater is lifted from the mixture and points of the peaks stand straight up.

Stir—To blend a combination of ingredients by hand using a spoon in a circular motion.

Strain—To separate solids from liquid by pouring through a sieve or colander.

Toss—To quickly and gently mix ingredients with a spoon or fork. Often done with flour and candied fruit in baked goods.

Whip—To beat rapidly by hand or with an electric mixer to add air and increase volume.

Whisk—A multi-looped wire mixing utensil with a handle used to whip items, such as sauces, eggs and cream, to a smooth, airy consistency. To whisk means to whip ingredients together.

Zest—See Peel.

Weight and Measure Equivalents

Teaspoon and Tablespoon Measures

Dash or pinch	= less than $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons	= $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon
3 teaspoons	= 1 tablespoon; $\frac{1}{2}$ fluid ounce
$4\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons	= $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons
2 tablespoons	= $\frac{1}{8}$ cup; 1 fluid ounce
4 tablespoons	= $\frac{1}{4}$ cup; 2 fluid ounces
$5\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons	= $\frac{1}{3}$ cup; 5 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon
8 tablespoons	= $\frac{1}{2}$ cup; 4 fluid ounces
$10\frac{2}{3}$ tablespoons	= $\frac{2}{3}$ cup; 10 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons
12 tablespoons	= $\frac{3}{4}$ cup; 6 fluid ounces
16 tablespoons	= 1 cup; 8 fluid ounces; $\frac{1}{2}$ pint

Cup Measures

$\frac{1}{8}$ cup	= 2 tablespoons; 1 fluid ounce
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	= 4 tablespoons; 2 fluid ounces
$\frac{1}{3}$ cup	= $5\frac{1}{3}$ tablespoons
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	= 8 tablespoons; 4 fluid ounces
$\frac{2}{3}$ cup	= $10\frac{2}{3}$ tablespoons
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	= 12 tablespoons; 6 fluid ounces
$\frac{7}{8}$ cup	= $\frac{3}{4}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons
1 cup	= 16 tablespoons; 8 fluid ounces; $\frac{1}{2}$ pint
2 cups	= 1 pint; 16 fluid ounces
4 cups	= 2 pints; 1 quart; 32 fluid ounces

Pints, Quarts, Gallons and Pounds

$\frac{1}{2}$ pint	= 1 cup; 8 fluid ounces
1 pint	= 2 cups; 16 fluid ounces
1 quart	= 4 cups; 32 fluid ounces
4 quarts	= 16 cups; 1 gallon
16 ounces	= 1 pound

FOOD EQUIVALENTS

Food	Equivalent
Apples	1 pound (3 medium) = $2\frac{3}{4}$ cups sliced
Bread Crumbs	1 slice = $\frac{1}{2}$ cup soft crumbs or $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dry crumbs
Butter or Margarine	1 pound = 2 cups or 4 sticks 1 stick = 8 tablespoons
Cocoa, Baking	1 pound = 4 cups
Coconut, Flaked	14 ounces = $5\frac{1}{2}$ cups
Cornmeal	1 pound = 3 cups uncooked
Corn Syrup	16 ounces = 2 cups
Cream Cheese	8 ounces = 16 tablespoons
Cream, Whipping	1 cup = 2 cups whipped
Egg Whites	1 cup = 8 to 10 whites
Flour	
All-Purpose	1 pound = about $3\frac{1}{2}$ cups
Cake	1 pound = about $4\frac{1}{2}$ cups
Whole Wheat	1 pound = about $3\frac{3}{4}$ cups
Frozen Whipped Topping	8 ounces = $3\frac{1}{2}$ cups
Gelatin, Unflavored	1 envelope = 1 tablespoon
Graham Crackers	16 crackers = 1 cup crumbs
Honey	1 pound = $1\frac{1}{3}$ cups
Marshmallows	
Large	1 cup = 7 to 9 marshmallows
Miniature	1 cup = about 100 marshmallows
Nuts	
Almonds	1 pound = 3 cups halves or 4 cups slivered
Ground	$3\frac{3}{4}$ ounces = 1 cup
Hazelnuts	1 pound = $3\frac{1}{2}$ cups whole
Pecans	1 pound = $4\frac{1}{2}$ cups chopped
Walnuts	1 pound = $3\frac{3}{4}$ cups chopped
Oats	
Old-Fashioned	1 pound = 5 cups
Quick-Cooking	1 pound = $5\frac{1}{2}$ cups
Raisins	15 ounces = $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups
Semisweet	
Chocolate Chips	6 ounces = 1 cup
Shortening	1 pound = 2 cups
Sugar	
Brown	1 pound = $2\frac{1}{4}$ cups
Confectioners'	1 pound = 4 cups
Granulated	1 pound = $2\frac{1}{4}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups
Yeast, Active Dry	1 envelope = $2\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons

The Basics of Cakes

Cake is the royalty of all desserts. Whether it's a light and airy angel food cake, a moist, cream-filled roll or an impressive triple decker crowned with frosting, each unforgettable bite always hits the sweet spot. There's simply no better way to celebrate any occasion, big or small, than with cake. So turn the page to find an array of splendid choices, from simple to lavish, to make the moment memorable.

Secrets for Successful Cakes

- Use butter, stick margarine (with at least 80% oil) or shortening. The fat should be softened (at room temperature). Whipped, tub, soft, liquid or reduced-fat products should not be used.
- Measure ingredients accurately, using the measuring tools and techniques suggested on pages 7 and 8.
- Arrange oven racks so that the cake will bake in the center of the oven. Preheat oven for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Most cake recipes call for creaming butter and sugar. Beat softened butter or shortening and sugar with an electric mixer or wooden spoon to a light and fluffy consistency, about 5 minutes.
- Mix the dry ingredients together to evenly distribute the leavener throughout the flour.
- Stop the mixer occasionally—or between additions of ingredients—and scrape the batter down sides of bowl with a plastic spatula.
- For a tender, golden crust, use aluminum pans with a dull rather than shiny or dark finish. If using glass baking dishes, reduce the oven temperature 25°.
- Fill pans half to three-fourths full. Thinner batters rise more than heavy batters, so only fill those pans half full.
- Pour thinner batters into pans, then tap pans on the counter to remove air bubbles. Spoon firmer batters into pans, then spread gently to even out.
- Leave at least 1 in. of space between each pan and sides of oven for good heat circulation. If using two oven racks, stagger pans on racks so that they are not directly over one another. Switch pan positions and rotate pans from front to back halfway through baking.
- Use a kitchen timer. Check for doneness at the minimum recommended baking time, then check every 2 minutes after that. Shortened cakes, or cakes that use some type of fat, are done when a toothpick inserted near the center of the cake comes out clean. (See Testing Shortened Cakes for Doneness on page 26.)
- Cool cakes for 10 minutes in the pan unless recipe directs otherwise. Loosen the cake by running a knife around the edge of the pan. Turn out onto a wire rack, place another rack over the cake and flip right side up. Cool completely before filling or frosting unless directed otherwise by recipe.
- If a cake sticks to the pan and will not come out when inverted, return to a heated oven for 1 minute, then try again to turn it out.

Types of Cakes

Cakes can be rich and moist, dense, buttery or airy and are divided into two basic categories.

- The first group is called shortened cakes, butter cakes or high-fat cakes. All these cakes use some type of fat: butter, margarine, shortening or oil. Many recipes for shortened cakes call for creaming the fat with sugar. The creaming step traps air in the batter, and it is this trapped air that expands during baking to give the cake its height. Cakes that use oil cannot be creamed. The oil is blended with the eggs and some of the other ingredients before the flour, spices and leaveners are added.
- The second group is called foam or low-fat cakes. These cakes have a high ratio of eggs to flour and, depending on the type of foam cake, may contain either no fat or a small amount of fat, generally in the form of egg yolk and oil. Beaten eggs give foam cakes their light and fluffy texture.

Flour Facts

All-purpose flour is the most commonly used flour and creates a good cake. Cake flour gives a more tender and delicate crumb. Self-rising flour contains the leavening agent and salt, so you only need to measure one ingredient. While you can substitute one flour for another, you will need to make some adjustments to your recipe.

- For 1 cup cake flour, use $\frac{3}{4}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour.
- For 1 cup all-purpose flour, use 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons cake flour.
- For 1 cup self-rising flour, place $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking powder and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt in a measuring cup. Add all-purpose flour to measure 1 cup.



White Layer Cake

Every recipe file should contain a standard, delicious cake like this one. Topped with your favorite flavor of frosting, it's great for any occasion.

—TASTE OF HOME TEST KITCHEN

PREP: 15 MIN. • **BAKE:** 30 MIN. + COOLING
YIELD: 12 SERVINGS

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter, softened
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar
4 egg whites
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
 $1\frac{1}{3}$ cups buttermilk
 $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups frosting of your choice

1. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add egg whites, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla. Combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt; add to creamed mixture alternately with buttermilk, beating well after each addition.
2. Spread evenly into two greased and floured 9-in. round baking pans. Bake at 350° for 30-35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks to cool completely. Spread frosting between layers and over the top and sides of cake.

Yellow Layer Cake

Instead of turning to a boxed cake mix, why not try your hand at this easy recipe for a basic yellow cake? You just can't beat the homemade goodness!

—TASTE OF HOME TEST KITCHEN

PREP: 10 MIN. • **BAKE:** 25 MIN. + COOLING
YIELD: 12 SERVINGS

$\frac{3}{3}$ cup butter, softened
 $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups sugar
2 eggs
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons vanilla extract
 $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups all-purpose flour
 $2\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
 $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups 2% milk
 $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups frosting of your choice

1. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla. Combine the flour, baking powder and salt; add to the creamed mixture alternately with milk, beating well after each addition.
2. Pour into two greased and floured 9-in. round baking pans. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks to cool completely.
3. Spread frosting between layers and over the top and sides of cake.

Lining Baking Pans with Waxed or Parchment Paper

To easily remove cakes from pans, consider lining pans with waxed or parchment paper. Place a pan on a piece of paper.



Trace the shape of the pan onto the paper, then cut out. Grease the pan; place the waxed or parchment paper in the pan and grease it. Gently peel off the paper as soon as the baked cake is inverted onto a wire rack to cool.

Preparing a Cake Pan

1. Grease the sides and bottom of the pan by spreading shortening with a paper towel over the interior of the pan.

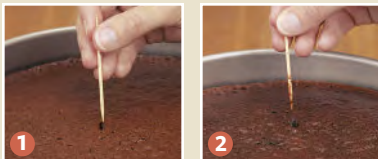


2. Sprinkle 1 to 2 tablespoons of flour into the greased pan; tilt the pan to coat bottom and sides. Turn pan over and tap to remove excess flour.



Testing Shortened Cakes for Doneness

1. Insert a toothpick in several spots near the center of the cake. If the toothpick comes out clean, the cake is done.
2. If the toothpick comes out with crumbs, the cake needs to bake longer.



Causes of Common Cake Conundrums

Cake has a sunken center

- Oven temperature was too low.
- Too much sugar was used, resulting in a thick, firm and overly brown crust.
- Too much liquid was used, resulting in a sticky layer above the bottom crust.

Cake has a peaked or cracked center

- Oven temperature was too high.
- Batter was overbeaten after the flour was added.
- A hard wheat (high-gluten) flour was used. Next time, try a soft wheat flour.

Cake has tunnels

- Oven temperature was too high.
- Batter was overbeaten after the flour was added, causing the gluten in the flour to be developed.

Cake is dry

- Oven temperature was too high.
- Too big a baking pan was used. The pan should be filled from half to three-fourths full.

Cake has a dark crust

- The baking pan was a dark color. For best results, use aluminum pans with a dull finish.
- Too much sugar was used, resulting in a thick, firm and overly brown crust.

Blueberry Bounty Cake

Everyone loves this moist, golden cake bursting with blueberries. Serve it for dessert, breakfast or brunch.

—ALICE TESCH WATERTOWN, WISCONSIN

PREP: 20 MIN. • **BAKE:** 45 MIN. + COOLING
YIELD: 12 SERVINGS (1 CUP SAUCE)

- 1½ cups butter, softened
 - 1¾ cups sugar
 - 4 eggs
 - 1 tablespoon grated lemon peel
 - 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
 - 3 cups cake flour
 - 2½ teaspoons baking powder
 - ¼ teaspoon salt
 - 1 cup lemonade
 - 1½ cups fresh or frozen blueberries
- BLUEBERRY SAUCE:**
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
 - ¼ cup sugar
 - ¼ cup water
 - 1 cup fresh or frozen blueberries, thawed

1. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in lemon peel and vanilla.
 2. Combine the flour, baking powder and salt; add to creamed mixture alternately with lemonade, beating well after each addition. Fold in blueberries.
 3. Pour into a greased and floured 10-in. fluted tube pan. Bake at 350° for 45-50 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 20 minutes before removing from pan to a wire rack to cool completely.
 4. In a small saucepan, combine cornstarch and sugar. Stir in water until smooth. Add blueberries; bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Cook and stir 1 minute longer or until thickened. Serve warm with cake.
- Editor's Note:** *If using frozen blueberries, use without thawing to avoid discoloring the batter.*



Poppy Seed Torte

I've loved this torte since I was a little girl. It's easy to make and tastes delicious.

—CORINNE HAUGSTAD
HALLOCK, MINNESOTA

PREP: 25 MIN. + SOAKING
BAKE: 20 MIN. + COOLING

- ⅓ cup poppy seeds
 - ¾ cup milk
 - 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
 - ¾ cup butter, softened
 - 1½ cups sugar
 - 2 cups cake flour
 - 2½ teaspoons baking powder
 - ¼ teaspoon salt
 - 4 egg whites, stiffly beaten
- FILLING:**
- ¾ cup sugar
 - 5 teaspoons cornstarch
 - 2½ cups milk
 - 6 egg yolks, lightly beaten
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 - ¼ cup chopped walnuts, optional
- Confectioners' sugar**

1. Place poppy seeds and milk in a small bowl; soak for 1 hour. Add vanilla. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add poppy seed mixture.
2. Sift together the flour, baking powder and salt; add to creamed mixture. Fold in egg whites. Spread into two well-greased and lightly floured 8-in. round baking pans.
3. Bake at 375° for 20-25 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool

Cutting Cakes into Layers

Using a ruler, mark the center of the side of the cake with a toothpick. Continue inserting toothpicks around the cake. Using the toothpicks as your guide, cut the cake horizontally in half with a long serrated knife. Carefully remove the top half.

- for 10 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks to cool completely.
4. For filling, in a small saucepan, combine the sugar and cornstarch. Stir in milk until smooth. Cook and stir over medium-high heat until thickened and bubbly. Reduce heat; cook and stir 2 minutes longer. Remove from the heat. Stir a small amount of hot filling into egg yolks; return all to pan, stirring constantly. Bring to a gentle boil; cook and stir 2 minutes longer. Remove from heat. Stir in vanilla and nuts if desired.
 5. Split cakes in half and spread filling between layers. Chill. Just before serving, dust with confectioners' sugar.



Angel Food Cake with Berry Sauce

We top light and airy angel food cake with a lovely berry sauce for a heavenly dessert. The sauce can also be used to top cake made from a mix.

—TASTE OF HOME TEST KITCHEN

PREP: 30 MIN. • **BAKE:** 50 MIN. + COOLING

YIELD: 16 SERVINGS (6 CUPS SAUCE)

- 12 egg whites
- 1 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1 cup cake flour
- 1 teaspoon cream of tartar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1¼ cups sugar
- ½ cup blueberry vodka
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon water

SAUCE:

- 2½ cups fresh raspberries, divided
- 2 cups fresh blueberries, divided
- ⅓ cup unsweetened pineapple juice
- 3 tablespoons raspberry liqueur
- 2 cups halved fresh strawberries
- 1 cup fresh blackberries

1. Place egg whites in a large bowl; let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes. Sift confectioners' sugar and flour together twice; set aside.

2. Add the cream of tartar, vanilla and salt to egg whites; beat on medium speed until soft peaks form. Gradually add sugar, about 2 tablespoons at a time, beating on high until stiff glossy peaks form and sugar is dissolved. Gradually fold in flour mixture, about ½ cup at a time.

3. Gently spoon into an ungreased 10-in. tube pan. Cut through the batter with a knife to remove air pockets. Bake on the lowest oven rack at 325° for 50-60 minutes or until lightly browned and entire top appears dry. Immediately invert pan; cool completely, about 1 hour.

4. Run a knife around side and center tube of pan. Remove cake to a serving plate. Brush top and sides of cake with vodka. Combine cornstarch and water; set aside.

5. For sauce: In a small saucepan, combine 1½ cups raspberries, 1 cup blueberries, pineapple juice and liqueur. Bring to a boil. Stir cornstarch mixture and add to the pan. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened.

6. Remove from the heat; stir in the strawberries, blackberries and remaining raspberries and blueberries. Serve sauce with cake.

Common Foam Cake Conundrums

Cake is heavy and dense

- Oven temperature was too low. Check temperature with an oven thermometer.
- Didn't use large eggs.
- Ingredients were folded in too vigorously.
- Eggs were underbeaten.
- There was egg yolk in the egg whites before beating.
- Egg whites were beaten in a bowl with a greasy film.

Cake top has sunk

- Oven temperature was too high. Check temperature with an oven thermometer.
- Cake was underbaked.

Secrets for Successful Foam Cakes

- Measure ingredients accurately, using the measuring tools and techniques suggested on pages 7 and 8.
- When baking foam cakes in tube pans, keep the oven rack in the lowest position. Preheat oven for 10 to 15 minutes before baking.
- Separate eggs when they are cold. (See Separating Eggs on page 14.)
- To ensure egg whites reach maximum volume, they should stand at room temperature no more than 30 minutes before beating. Also, make sure there are no specks of egg yolk in the white.
- Before beating egg whites, make sure the bowl and beaters are clean by washing them thoroughly in hot soapy water and drying with a clean kitchen towel. Use metal or glass bowls. Plastic bowls, even freshly washed and dried ones, may have an oily film on them.
- Beat whole eggs or egg yolks until they are thick and lemon-colored.
- Gently fold in the ingredients. Using a rubber spatula, gently cut down through the ingredients/batter, move across the bottom of the bowl and bring up part of the mixture.
- Use only the pan size recommended in the recipe.
- For a tender, golden crust, use aluminum pans with a dull rather than a shiny or dark finish.
- Do not grease or flour tube your pans when baking foam cakes. To rise properly, the batter needs to cling to the sides of the pan.
- To avoid large air pockets in the cake, cut through the batter with a knife to break air bubbles.
- Use a kitchen timer. Foam cakes are done when the top springs back when touched and the cracks at the top of the cake look and feel dry. (See Testing Foam Cakes for Doneness at right.)
- It's important to cool foam cakes upside down in the pan, otherwise they will collapse and flatten. If using a tube pan with legs, invert the pan onto its legs. If using a tube pan without legs, invert the pan and place the neck over a funnel or narrow bottle.
- Cool cakes completely in the pan before removing. To loosen from the pan, run a thin metal spatula around the edge of the pan and around the center tube using a sawing motion. Gently press the metal spatula between the pan and the cake to loosen more. If the cake pan has a removable bottom, lift out the cake and run a knife along the bottom of the cake. If the pan is one piece, invert the pan onto a plate; tap the side of the pan with the flat side of a knife and lift the pan away from the cake.
- Cool the cake completely before filling or frosting.
- Cut foam cakes with a serrated knife or electric knife with a sawing motion.

Testing Foam Cakes for Doneness

Foam cakes are done when the top springs back when touched with your finger and the cracks at the top of the cake look and feel dry.





Pumpkin Cake Roll

This is great to keep in the freezer for a quick dessert for my family or unexpected guests, to take to a gathering or to give as a yummy gift.

ERICA BERCHTOLD FREEPORT, ILLINOIS

PREP: 30 MIN. • **BAKE:** 15 MIN. + FREEZING

YIELD: 10 SERVINGS

- 3 eggs, separated
- 1 cup sugar, divided
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup canned pumpkin
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt

FILLING:

- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- 2 tablespoons butter, softened
- 1 cup confectioners' sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon vanilla extract
- Additional confectioners' sugar, optional

1. Line a 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan with waxed paper; grease the paper and set aside. In a large bowl, beat egg yolks on high speed until thick and lemon-colored. Gradually add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar and pumpkin, beating on high until sugar is almost dissolved.

2. In a small bowl, beat egg whites until soft peaks form. Gradually add remaining sugar, beating until stiff peaks form. Fold into egg yolk mixture. Combine the flour, baking soda, cinnamon and salt; gently fold into pumpkin mixture. Spread into prepared pan.

Making a Cake Roll

- 1.** Cool cake in the pan for 5 minutes. Turn out onto a kitchen towel dusted with confectioners' sugar; gently peel off waxed paper. Roll up cake in the towel jelly-roll style, starting with a short side. Cool completely.
- 2.** Unroll cake and spread filling evenly over cake to within $\frac{1}{2}$ in. of edges.
- 3.** Starting with a short side, roll up the cake loosely, pulling away the towel. Place seam side down on a serving platter.



3. Bake at 375° for 12-15 minutes or until cake springs back when lightly touched. Cool for 5 minutes. Turn cake onto a kitchen towel dusted with confectioners' sugar. Gently peel off waxed paper. Roll up cake in the towel jelly-roll style, starting with a short side. Cool completely on a wire rack.

4. In a small bowl, beat the cream cheese, butter, confectioners' sugar and vanilla until smooth. Unroll cake; spread filling evenly to within $\frac{1}{2}$ in. of edges. Roll up again. Cover and freeze until firm. May be frozen for up to 3 months. Remove from the freezer 15 minutes before cutting. Dust with confectioners' sugar if desired.

White Chocolate Torte

Looking for a change from heavy chocolate desserts? This white chocolate cake is wonderfully moist and slices well.

NORMA VAN DEVANDER

CALAIS, MAINE

PREP: 20 MIN. • **BAKE:** 25 MIN. + COOLING

YIELD: 14-16 SERVINGS

- 1 cup butter, softened
 - 2 cups sugar
 - 4 ounces white baking chocolate, melted and cooled
 - 4 eggs
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons clear vanilla extract
 - 3 cups all-purpose flour
 - 1 teaspoon baking soda
 - 1 cup buttermilk
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped pecans, toasted
- FROSTING:**
- 2 packages (one 8 ounces, one 3 ounces) cream cheese, softened
 - $\frac{1}{3}$ cup butter, softened
 - 4 ounces white baking chocolate, melted and cooled
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons clear vanilla extract
 - $6\frac{1}{2}$ cups confectioners' sugar
- Chocolate curls**

1. Line three greased 9-in. round baking pans with waxed paper and grease the paper; set aside. In a large



bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in chocolate. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla. Combine flour and baking soda; gradually add to creamed mixture alternately with buttermilk and water, beating well after each addition. Fold in pecans. Pour batter into prepared pans.

2. Bake at 350° for 23-27 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks; discard waxed paper.

3. For frosting, in a large bowl, beat cream cheese and butter until fluffy. Beat in chocolate and vanilla. Gradually add confectioners' sugar until smooth. Spread frosting between layers and over top and sides of cake. Garnish with chocolate curls. Store in the refrigerator.

To make your own block of chocolate for creating curls, melt chocolate chips or pieces, stir until smooth and pour into a plastic mold (such as the container that holds sticks of shortening). Let stand until the chocolate is completely set.





Lemon Coconut Cake

If you're pressed for time, use a white cake mix and dress it up with the filling and frosting from this recipe. This is a lovely dessert for spring and summer.

—LADONNA REED PONCA CITY, OKLAHOMA

PREP: 1 HOUR + COOLING

BAKE: 20 MIN. + COOLING

YIELD: 12-14 SERVINGS

- 5 egg whites
- ¾ cup shortening
- 1½ cups sugar
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup milk

FILLING:

- ¾ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- Dash salt
- ¾ cup cold water
- 2 egg yolks
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon butter

FROSTING:

- ¾ cup shortening
- 3¾ cups confectioners' sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup water
- 1¼ cups flaked coconut

1. Place egg whites in a small bowl; let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes. In a large bowl, cream shortening and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in vanilla. Combine the flour, baking powder and salt; add to creamed mixture alternately with milk. Beat egg whites until stiff peaks form; gradually fold into creamed mixture.
2. Pour into three greased and floured 9-in. round baking pans. Bake at 350° for 18-20 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes; remove from pans to wire racks to cool completely.
3. In a heavy saucepan, combine sugar, cornstarch and salt. Stir in water until smooth. Cook and stir over medium-high heat until thickened. Reduce heat; cook and stir 2 minutes longer. Remove from the heat. Stir in a small amount of filling into egg yolks; return all to the pan, stirring constantly. Bring to a boil; cook and stir 2 minutes longer. Remove from the heat. Stir in lemon juice and butter. Cool, without stirring, to room temperature.
4. In a large bowl, cream shortening and confectioners' sugar until light and fluffy; beat in vanilla. Gradually add water, beating until smooth. Spread filling between cake layers. Frost top and sides of cake; sprinkle with coconut.

Secrets for Successful Frosting

- Always sift confectioners' sugar before using it for frosting. If there are any lumps in the sugar, there will be lumps in the frosting, which will clog decorating tips.
- Frosting needs to be just the right consistency for spreading and decorating. If it's too thin, add a little confectioners' sugar. If it's too thick, add a little milk.
- Tint white frosting with liquid, gel or paste food coloring. Liquid will give a pastel color; gel and paste give a deeper color. The color generally darkens as the frosting dries.



Chocolate Cupcakes

If you love chocolate, you're going to love these scrumptious cupcakes. Chocolate curls are a showy way to top these gorgeous gems.

MARLENE MARTIN

COUNTRY HARBOUR MINES, NOVA SCOTIA

PREP: 20 MIN. • **BAKE:** 15 MIN. + COOLING

YIELD: 16 CUPCAKES

- ½ cup butter, softened
 - 1 cup sugar
 - 1 egg
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 - 1½ cups all-purpose flour
 - ½ cup baking cocoa
 - 1 teaspoon baking soda
 - ¼ teaspoon salt
 - ½ cup water
 - ½ cup buttermilk
- Frosting of your choice**

1. In a small bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in egg and vanilla. Combine the flour, cocoa, baking soda and salt; gradually add to

Frosting Cupcakes in a Flash

To quickly frost your cupcakes, place frosting in a bowl. The frosting should be a soft, spreadable consistency. If it is too stiff, add milk a teaspoon at a time until it reaches desired consistency. Dip the tops of your cupcakes into the frosting, twist slightly and lift up.

Cupcake Capers

Batter for a two-layer 9-in. cake can be used to make 2 to 2½ dozen cupcakes. Fill greased or paper-lined muffin cups two-thirds full. Bake at 350 for 20 to 30 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool cupcakes for 20 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks to cool completely. Frost cupcakes as desired.

To make cupcakes of the same size, use a solid plastic ice cream scoop to measure out the batter and fill the muffin cups.

creamed mixture alternately with water and buttermilk, beating well after each addition.

2. Fill paper-lined muffin cups two-thirds full. Bake at 375° for 12-15 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks to cool completely. Frost cupcakes.

Simple Frosting Finishes

To give cakes a little pizzazz without a lot of fuss, try these easy decorating techniques. For the best results, use a fluffy, creamy frosting.



Scallops

Smooth frosting over top of cake. Turn a teaspoon tip side down and press the tip in rows across the top of cake, making scallop marks in the frosting.



Waves

Smooth frosting over cake. Run the tines of a table fork through the frosting in a wavy motion. You can also use a cake comb for a similar effect.



Peaks

Smooth frosting over top and sides of cake. With an icing spatula or small flat metal spatula, press a flat side of the spatula tip in frosting and pull straight up, forming a peak.



Parallel Lines

Smooth frosting over top and sides of cake. It is easier if you can place the cake on a turntable. Hold a cake comb at a 45° angle to the side of the cake and rotate the turntable until entire side of the cake is scored. If a turntable is not available, just sweep the comb around the side of the cake.

For the top of the cake, sweep the comb over the top in a circular pattern.



Swirls

Smooth frosting over top and sides of cake. With the tip of an icing spatula or small flat metal spatula, make a swirling or waving movement over top and sides of cake.

For more texture, use the back of a spoon and make a small twisting motion in one direction. Then move the spoon over a little and make another twist in the opposite direction.



Chocolate Velvet Dessert

This creamy concoction is the result of several attempts to duplicate a dessert I enjoyed on vacation. It looks so beautiful on a buffet table that many folks are tempted to forgo the main course in favor of this chocolaty treat.

—MOLLY SEIDEL EDGEWOOD, NEW MEXICO

PREP: 20 MIN. • **BAKE:** 45 MIN. + CHILLING

YIELD: 12-16 SERVINGS

- 1½ cups chocolate wafer crumbs
 - 2 tablespoons sugar
 - ¼ cup butter, melted
 - 2 cups (12 ounces) semisweet chocolate chips
 - 6 egg yolks
 - 1¾ cups heavy whipping cream
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- CHOCOLATE BUTTERCREAM FROSTING:**
- ½ cup butter, softened
 - 3 cups confectioners' sugar
 - 3 tablespoons baking cocoa
 - 3 to 4 tablespoons 2% milk

1. In a small bowl, combine wafer crumbs and sugar; stir in butter. Press onto the bottom and 1½ in. up the sides of a greased 9-in. springform pan. Place on a baking sheet. Bake at 350° for 10 minutes. Cool on a wire rack.
2. In a large microwave-safe bowl, melt chocolate chips; stir until smooth. Cool. In a small bowl, combine the egg yolks, cream and vanilla. Gradually stir a third of the cream mixture into melted chocolate until blended. Fold in remaining cream mixture just until blended. Pour into crust.
3. Place pan on a baking sheet. Bake at 350° for 45-50 minutes or until center



is almost set. Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a knife around edge of pan to loosen; cool 1 hour longer. Refrigerate overnight.

4. In a small bowl, combine the butter, confectioners' sugar, cocoa and enough milk to achieve a piping consistency. Using a large star tip, pipe frosting on dessert.

Fancy Frosting & Patterns

Decorate cakes like a pro with decorating tips and pastry or resealable plastic bags. Cut a small hole in the corner of the bag and insert a decorating tip. Reinforce the seal between the bag and tip with tape or a plastic coupler. The coupler lets you easily change decorating tips.



To fill a pastry or resealable plastic bag with frosting, insert a decorating tip if desired and place bag in a measuring cup. Roll down top edge to make a cuff. Fill about half full with frosting. Roll up cuff. Smooth filling down toward tip to remove air bubbles, which will cause breaks in the design when piping. Twist top of bag shut.

1 Cake, 3 Ways

Behold the **world's most adaptable cake**. Customize your creation by choosing from a trio of **fab fillings** and a gallery of extraordinary embellishments.



Spoon-Swirl Technique

To decorate your cake with graceful swirls, all you need is the tip of a spoon. To apply, scoop a generous amount of frosting onto the back of the spoon. Place the spoon on the cake with its tip in the 12 o'clock position, then swirl the spoon in a half circle to the left, ending in the 6 o'clock position. Repeat until cake is covered.

Girolle How-To

Mount chocolate roll on girolle according to manufacturer's directions. Alternating between room temperature and refrigerator as needed to bring roll to correct temperature, rotate cutter over chocolate roll lightly, releasing ruffles in 3- to 4-in. pieces. Refrigerate ruffles until ready to arrange on frosted cake.

Create Chocolate Ribbons

Combine 8 oz. melted white candy coating and 1 tablespoon oil. Using a small offset spatula, spread mixture thinly in an 8-in. length on freezer paper. Dry slightly; trim edges to form an inset spatula, spread mixture thinly in an 8-in. length on freezer paper. Dry slightly; trim edges to form an inset spatula, spread mixture thinly in an 8-in. length on freezer paper. Peel ribbon from paper and fold into a loop as shown. Repeat, making 13 loops. Secure loops to top of frosted cake using a dab of frosting.

Heavenly Chocolate Cake

The cake's name says it all. Plus, it's tall, dark and delicious.

—**BILLIE B. ISAACS** MIAMISBURG, OHIO

PREP: 40 MIN. **BAKE:** 24 MIN.

YIELD: 12 SERVINGS

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 2½ cups sugar
- 5 eggs
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup baking cocoa
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- ¾ teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1½ cups water

1. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla. Combine the flour, cocoa, baking soda, baking powder and salt; add to the creamed mixture alternately with water, beating well after each addition.

2. Pour into three greased and floured 9-in. round baking pans. Bake at 350° for 24 to 28 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes; remove cakes from pans and transfer to wire racks to cool completely.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: WINTER WHITE FROSTING AS FILLING, RASPBERRY FILLING, ESPRESSO FILLING

Winter White Frosting & Filling

In a microwave, melt 1 lb. chopped **white baking chocolate**; stir until smooth. Cool to room temperature. In a large bowl, beat three 8-oz. packages softened **cream cheese** with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup softened **butter** until light and fluffy. Beat in cooled baking chocolate and 2 tablespoons **lemon juice** until smooth. Spread 2 cups on tops of bottom and middle cake layers; spread remaining frosting over cake. *Yield: 8 cups.*

For frosting only: Use 12 oz. chopped white baking chocolate, 18 oz. cream cheese, 3 tablespoons butter and $4\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons lemon juice; follow directions above. *Yield: 6 cups.*

—TASTE OF HOME FOOD STYLISTS

Raspberry Filling

In a small bowl, beat $\frac{3}{4}$ cup **heavy whipping cream** until it begins to thicken. Add $\frac{1}{3}$ cup **red raspberry preserves**, $2\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons **sugar** and $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons **raspberry liqueur**; beat until stiff peaks form. Spread on tops of bottom and middle cake layers. *Yield: 2 cups.*

—LAURA MCDOWELL LAKE VILLA, ILLINOIS

Espresso Filling

In a small bowl, mix 2 tablespoons instant **espresso powder** and $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons hot water until smooth; cool. In a large bowl, beat $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups **mascarpone cheese**, 1 cup **confectioners' sugar** (sifted), $\frac{3}{4}$ cup **heavy whipping cream**, $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons **vanilla extract** and espresso mixture on medium speed until creamy and slightly thickened (don't overmix). Spread on tops of bottom and middle cake layers. *Yield: 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups.*

—MEGAN BYERS WICHITA, KANSAS

Vanilla Extract

Real vs. Imitation?

For many shoppers, choosing between imitation and pure vanilla extract comes down to price—so imitation flavoring wins. But in a classic case of “you get what you pay for,” the choice is really about flavor: The organic compounds that bless pure vanilla extract with a deep, alluring flavor give the real thing the edge. Our advice? Especially during times such as the holidays, when each dish needs to shine, pure vanilla extract is worth every penny.

Uses for Leftover Frosting

If you have a little frosting left over after decorating a cake, you can use it to make the following sweet treats.

- Spread some frosting over a graham cracker or the flat side of cookie, such as a vanilla wafer or gingersnap. Top with another cracker or cookie.
- Spread frosting on top of an ice cream bar, then top with another bar and cut widthwise in half. Cover with whipped topping and freeze. When ready to serve, drizzle each serving with ice cream topping and sprinkle with chopped nuts if desired.

Properly Storing Cakes

- Cover and store cakes for 2 to 3 days at room temperature. Cakes with fillings or frostings that contain perishable ingredients (such as cream cheese, yogurt, whipping cream, sour cream and eggs) should be stored in the refrigerator.
- Unfrosted cakes and ones frosted with a simple buttercream frosting can be frozen. Place individual cake layers on a baking sheet and freeze. Once frozen, wrap in plastic wrap or place in resealable plastic freezer bags. Freeze unfrosted cakes for up to 4 months and frosted cakes for up to 2 months. Not all frostings are suitable for freezing. Thaw cakes in the refrigerator.

Baking Cakes at High Altitudes

High altitude (over 3,000 feet) has less air pressure and drier air. These conditions affect baked goods. The lower air pressure allows the gases created by the leavening agents to expand more quickly and causes liquids to evaporate and boil at lower temperatures. The drier air also dries out the flour.

For cakes, this means that there might be excessive rising from the gases produced by the leavening. This could cause the texture to be coarse or the cake to fall before the structure is set by baking. Faster evaporation of the

liquid, due to a lower boiling point, would reduce the amount of liquid and increase the concentration of sugar. This higher sugar concentration may also weaken the structure of the cake.

Some measures to take for shortened cakes are to increase the oven temperature 15° to 25°, which allows cakes to set faster and prevent falling. Fill baking pans half-full, not two-thirds full, since cakes rise higher. Reduce the leavener and the sugar and increase the liquid. Here are some general guidelines for adjusting ingredients for shortened cakes.

Adjustment	3,000 Feet	5,000 Feet	7,000 Feet
For each teaspoon of baking powder, reduce by:	$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon	$\frac{1}{8}$ - $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon	$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon
For each cup of sugar, reduce by:	0-1 tablespoon	0-2 tablespoons	1-3 tablespoons
For each cup of liquid, increase by:	1-2 tablespoons	2-4 tablespoons	3-4 tablespoons

For foam cakes, only beat the egg whites until soft peaks form (see page 14). To strengthen the structure of the cake, decrease the amount of sugar by a tablespoon or two and increase the amount of flour or egg component of the cake a little. Increasing the oven temperature by 15° to 25° will also help set the cake structure sooner.

The Basics of Cheesecakes

There's no dessert more heavenly than a slice of rich, velvety cheesecake. So go ahead and indulge in this dreamy sensation in all its lusciousness...whether you're hosting an elegant dinner party or simply seeking the perfect grand finale to a weeknight meal. While cheesecakes do require a bit of planning to allow for chilling, they are actually easy to make. Their make-ahead convenience means dessert is always ready and waiting.

Secrets for Successful Cheesecakes

- Measure ingredients accurately, using the measuring tools and techniques suggested on pages 7 and 8.
- Before preheating the oven, arrange oven racks so the cheesecake will be in the center of the oven.
- Preheat the oven for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Grease bottom and sides of the springform pan to help prevent the filling from cracking while cooling. It will naturally pull away from the sides.
- For best results, use regular cream cheese and sour cream, unless a recipe specifically calls for reduced-fat or fat-free products.
- To avoid lumps, soften cream cheese at room temperature for 30 minutes before mixing. If it is too firm, the batter won't be smooth after blending.
- The batter should be completely smooth and free of lumps before adding eggs. Add the eggs all at once and beat on low speed just until blended. Overbeating at this step will beat in too much air. The cheesecake will puff while baking, then collapse and split when cooled. Stop the mixer occasionally and scrape down the batter from the sides of the bowl.
- The springform pan should not be warped and should seal tightly. If the seal is loose, tightly wrap heavy-duty foil around the outside of the pan to prevent butter in the crust from leaking out. Place on a baking sheet.
- Open the oven door as little as possible while baking, especially during the first 30 minutes. Drafts can cause a cheesecake to crack.
- Use a kitchen timer. Check for doneness at the minimum recommended baking time. A cheesecake is done when the edges are slightly puffed and when the center (about 1 in. diameter) jiggles slightly when the side of the pan is tapped with a spoon. The retained heat will continue to cook the center while cooling. A cheesecake cooked in a water bath will be just set across the top. The top will look dull, not shiny. Don't use a knife to test for doneness—doing so will cause the top to crack.
- Cool cheesecakes for 10 minutes on a wire rack; run a knife around the inside edge to loosen from pan. Don't remove the sides of pan yet.
- Cheesecakes need to set before slicing. Cool on a wire rack in a draft-free area for 1 hour. Refrigerate, uncovered, for 3 to 4 hours. When it's cold, cover with foil or plastic wrap and chill for at least 6 hours or overnight.
- When ready to serve, open the latch of the pan and carefully lift the side straight up.



Cheesecakes

Traditional Cheesecake

This impressive tall cheesecake is rich and creamy, but not too sweet. It goes equally well with a cup of coffee or a glass of wine.

—ANNE ADDESSO SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN

PREP: 30 MIN. + COOLING

BAKE: 1½ HOURS + CHILLING

YIELD: 16 SERVINGS

2½ cups graham cracker crumbs
¼ cup sugar
½ cup butter, melted

FILLING:

4 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese, softened
2 cups (16 ounces) sour cream
1¾ cups sugar
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
4 eggs, lightly beaten
2 tablespoons caramel ice cream topping
4 Heath candy bars (1.4 ounces each), chopped

1. In a small bowl, combine the graham cracker crumbs and sugar; stir in butter. Press onto the bottom and up the sides of a greased 9-in. springform pan. Place on a baking sheet. Bake at 325° for 18-22 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool on a wire rack.

2. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese, sour cream, sugar, lemon juice and vanilla until smooth. Add eggs; beat on low speed just until combined. Pour into crust. Place pan on a double thickness of heavy-duty foil (about 18 in. square). Securely wrap foil around pan.

3. Place in a larger baking pan; add 1 in. of hot water to larger pan. Bake at 325° for 1½ hours or until center is just set and top appears dull. Remove pan from water bath. Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes.

4. Carefully run a knife around edge of pan to loosen; cool 1 hour longer. Refrigerate overnight. Remove sides of pan. Garnish with caramel topping and candy bar pieces.

Making a Cheesecake Crumb Crust

1. Place cookies or crackers in a heavy-duty resealable plastic bag. Seal bag, pushing out as much air as possible. Press a rolling pin over the bag, crushing the cookies or crackers into fine crumbs. Or process cookies and crackers in a food processor.



2. Use a flat-bottomed measuring cup or glass to firmly press the prepared crumb mixture onto the bottom (and up the sides if recipe directs) of a springform pan.

Preparing a Water Bath for Cheesecakes

1. Using a double thickness of heavy-duty foil, make an 18-in. square. Center springform pan on foil, then tightly mold foil around pan.



2. Place the springform pan in a larger pan, such as a large shallow baking dish or roasting pan. Set dish on rack in oven. Using a kettle or large measuring cup, carefully pour hot water into larger pan to a depth of 1 in.



Pumpkin Walnut Cheesecake

One of my friends gave me this recipe, and it has quickly become a family favorite. It's a great dessert for Thanksgiving. You won't be able to stop at one slice!

—SUSAN GAROUTTE GEORGETOWN, TEXAS

PREP: 40 MIN. • **BAKE:** 1½ HOURS + CHILLING

YIELD: 12 SERVINGS

2 cups graham cracker crumbs
¼ cup sugar
6 tablespoons butter, melted

FILLING:

3 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese, softened
¾ cup sugar
¾ cup packed dark brown sugar
1 can (15 ounces) solid-pack pumpkin
¼ cup heavy whipping cream

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground cloves
5 eggs, lightly beaten

TOPPING:

6 tablespoons butter, softened
1 cup packed dark brown sugar
1 cup chopped walnuts

1. Place a greased 9-in. springform pan on a double thickness of heavy-duty foil (about 18 in. square). Securely wrap foil around pan. In a small bowl, combine cracker crumbs and sugar; stir in butter. Press onto the bottom and 1 in. up the sides of prepared pan.

2. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese and sugars until smooth. Beat in the pumpkin, cream, cinnamon and cloves until blended. Add eggs; beat on low speed just until combined. Pour over crust. Place springform pan in a large baking pan; add 1 in. of hot water to larger pan.

3. Bake at 325° for 1 hour. For topping, in a small bowl, combine butter and brown sugar. Stir in walnuts. Carefully sprinkle over hot cheesecake.

4. Bake 30 minutes longer or until center is just set. Remove springform pan from water bath. Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a knife around edge of pan to loosen; cool 1 hour longer. Refrigerate overnight. Remove sides of pan.

Loosening Cheesecakes from Sides of Pan

To prevent cracks during cooling, it's important to loosen the cheesecake from the sides of the pan after baking.



First cool the cheesecake on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Then carefully run a table knife or small metal spatula between cheesecake and the inside of pan. Cool 1 hour longer. Refrigerate overnight before removing the sides of the pan.

Cranberry Celebration Cheesecake

This pretty cheesecake is a cranberry and dessert lover's dream. Cool and creamy, it's just right for the holidays...or any day!

—**TERI RASEY** CADILLAC, MICHIGAN

PREP: 45 MIN. • **BAKE:** 1¼ HOURS + CHILLING

YIELD: 16 SERVINGS

- ½ cup dried cranberries
- 2 cups cake flour
- ½ cup ground almonds
- ¼ cup confectioners' sugar
- ½ cup cold butter, cubed

FILLING:

- ¾ cup plus 1½ cups sugar, divided
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- ¼ cup cranberry juice
- 2 cups fresh or frozen cranberries
- 4 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese, softened
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 4 eggs, lightly beaten

TOPPING:

- 2 cups (16 ounces) sour cream
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- ¼ cup ground almonds
- ¼ cup sliced almonds, toasted

1. In a food processor, finely chop dried cranberries. Add flour, almonds and confectioners' sugar; process until blended. Add butter; pulse just until crumbly.
2. Press onto the bottom and 1½ in. up sides of a greased 10-in. springform pan. Place on a baking sheet. Bake at 350° for 10 minutes.
3. In a small saucepan, combine ¾ cup sugar and cornstarch; stir in cranberry juice until smooth. Add berries. Cook and stir until thickened and bubbly. Set aside.
4. In a large bowl, beat the cream cheese, vanilla and remaining sugar until smooth. Add eggs; beat just until combined. Pour half of batter into crust. Carefully spoon ¾ cup berry mixture over batter; top with remaining batter.
5. Bake for 45 minutes. Reduce heat to 250°. Bake 25-30 minutes longer or until



center is almost set. Combine the sour cream, sugar and vanilla; spread over top. Bake 20-30 minutes or until set. Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Run a knife around edge of pan to loosen; cool 1 hour longer. Spread remaining berry mixture over the top. Refrigerate overnight.

6. Beat cream until stiff peaks form; fold in ground almonds. Pipe around top edge of cheesecake; sprinkle with sliced almonds.

Making a Pastry Crust for Cheesecakes

1. Prepare crust according to recipe directions. Remove the bottom from a springform pan. Pat about half of the dough onto pan bottom. Or, if recipe directs, roll out half of dough, then place on bottom of pan and trim to fit. Bake as directed.



2. Cool completely. Attach sides of pan and grease sides. Pat remaining dough 1½-in. up the sides of the pan and press onto the bottom crust along the sides.

Blueberry Swirl Cheesecake

This is my favorite blueberry recipe, which I often make for family get-togethers. I know your clan will love it, too.

—**CATHY MEDLEY** CLYDE, OHIO

PREP: 40 MIN. • **BAKE:** 70 MIN. + CHILLING

YIELD: 12 SERVINGS

- 1½ cups fresh blueberries
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon cold water

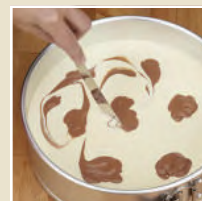
CRUST:

- 1 cup graham cracker crumbs (about 16 squares)
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted

FILLING:

- 3 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

Swirling Filling into a Cheesecake



Spoon small amounts of the filling to be swirled in a random pattern onto cheesecake batter. Cut through the cheesecake

batter with a knife to swirl in the filling. Be careful not to draw the blade through the filling too often, or the filling will blend into the rest of the batter and you'll lose the pretty pattern.

Slicing a Cheesecake

Use a straight-edge knife to cut a cheesecake. Warm the blade in hot water, dry and slice. Clean and rewarm the knife after each cut.

- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 4 eggs, lightly beaten

1. In a small saucepan, combine the blueberries, sugar and lemon juice. Cook and stir over medium heat for 5 minutes or until the berries are softened. Combine cornstarch and water until smooth; stir into the blueberry mixture. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Remove from the heat; cool to room temperature. Transfer to a blender; cover and process until smooth. Set aside.
2. For crust, in a small bowl, combine the crumbs and sugar; stir in the butter. Press onto the bottom of a greased 9-in. springform pan. Place pan on a baking sheet. Bake at 350° for 10 minutes. Cool on a wire rack.
3. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Beat in the sour cream, flour and vanilla. Add eggs; beat on low speed just until combined. Pour filling over crust. Drizzle with blueberry mixture; cut through batter with a knife to swirl.
4. Return pan to baking sheet. Bake at 350° for 1 hour or until center is almost set. Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a knife around the edge of pan to loosen; cool 1 hour longer. Refrigerate overnight. Refrigerate leftovers.



Banana Cheesecake

We're lucky to have banana trees in our backyard. After making bread and muffins, I still had some of our bountiful crop left, so I decided to try this recipe.

—**SERA SMITH** WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

PREP: 45 MIN. • **BAKE:** 55 MIN. + CHILLING

YIELD: 12-14 SERVINGS

- ¾ cup all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup finely chopped pecans
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 6 tablespoons butter, melted

FILLING:

- 1 cup mashed ripe bananas
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese, softened
- 1¼ cups sugar
- 1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten

TOPPING:

- 1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream
- ¼ cup sugar
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup assorted fresh fruit

1. Combine the first five ingredients; stir in butter. Press onto the bottom of a greased 9-in. springform pan; place on a baking sheet. Bake at 350° for 10 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool on a wire rack.

2. Combine bananas and lemon juice; set aside. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Beat in the sour cream, cornstarch, vanilla and salt. Add eggs; beat on low speed just until combined. Fold in banana mixture. Pour into crust. Place pan on a baking sheet.

3. Bake at 350° for 50-60 minutes or until center is almost set. Let stand for 5 minutes. Combine sour cream, sugar and vanilla; spread over top of cheesecake. Bake 5 minutes longer.

4. Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a knife around edge of pan; cool 1 hour longer. Refrigerate overnight. Garnish with fruit.



Berry Cheesecake Pie

Since I don't care for traditional pie crust, I usually eat only the filling of pie. That changed when I discovered this recipe. Boasting a luscious cheesecake flavor, this pretty pie gets creative with phyllo dough.

—**DEANNE CAUSEY** MIDLAND, TEXAS

PREP: 20 MIN. • **BAKE:** 35 MIN. + CHILLING

YIELD: 6-8 SERVINGS

- 8 sheets phyllo dough (14 inches x 9 inches)
- 6 tablespoons butter, melted
- 2 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 cups fresh or frozen blueberries
- ½ cup strawberry jelly
- 1 cup whipped topping
- Sliced fresh strawberries and additional blueberries, optional

1. Place one phyllo sheet in a greased 9-in. pie plate; brush with butter. Repeat seven times; trim edges. (Keep remaining phyllo covered with plastic wrap and a damp towel to prevent it from drying out.)

2. Bake at 425° for 6-8 minutes or until edges are lightly browned (center will puff up). Cool on a wire rack.

3. For filling, in a large bowl, beat the cream cheese, sugar and vanilla until smooth. Add eggs; beat on low speed just until combined. Fold in blueberries. Spoon into crust.

4. Bake at 350° for 10 minutes; cover edges with foil to prevent overbrowning. Bake 23-27 minutes longer or until center is almost set. Cool on a wire rack for 1 hour. Refrigerate until chilled.

5. In a small bowl, beat jelly until smooth; spread over filling. Spread with whipped topping. Garnish with strawberries and additional blueberries if desired.

Editor's Note: *If using frozen blueberries, use without thawing to avoid discoloring the batter.*

Topping a Cheesecake with Sour Cream

Sour cream toppings are frequently spread over cheesecakes a few minutes before the end of baking. Remove cheesecake from oven and let stand according to recipe directions. Spoon sour cream topping around the edge of cheesecake, then carefully spread toward the center and finish baking.



Disguise a Cracked Cheesecake

If the top of your cheesecake has a crack in it, just cover it up! Topping the cheesecake with fruit, a sour cream topping or your favorite jam will offer a delectable disguise.



Common Cheesecake Conundrums

The cheesecake has lumps

- The cream cheese was not softened before mixing and/or was not thoroughly blended before adding the eggs.

The cheesecake has a cracked top

- The batter was overbeaten.
- The oven temperature was too high.
- The cheesecake was overbaked.
- Doneness was checked with a knife or toothpick.

- The cheesecake was cooled in a drafty area or the oven door was opened during baking.
- Next time, try baking the cheesecake in a water bath.

The top cracked when the sides of the pan were removed

- Loosen the cheesecake from the sides of the pan with a knife before it is completely cooled.



Strawberries and Champagne Cheesecake

I bake from scratch because I believe that love—and sweetened condensed milk—are the best ingredients.

—KATHRYN WORK LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

PREP: 45 MIN. • **BAKE:** 55 MIN. + CHILLING

YIELD: 12 SERVINGS

- 1 cup Champagne or other sparkling wine
- 2 cups chocolate graham cracker crumbs (about 14 whole crackers)
- 2 cups sugar, divided
- ½ cup butter, melted
- 1 cup sliced fresh strawberries
- 3 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup sweetened condensed milk
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 egg yolks
- 20 fresh strawberries, hulled
- ⅓ cup milk chocolate chips
- 1 teaspoon shortening, divided
- ⅓ cup white chocolate chips
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- ¼ cup confectioners' sugar

1. Place Champagne in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil; cook until liquid is reduced to about ¼ cup, about 8 minutes. Cool slightly.
2. In a large bowl, combine the cracker crumbs, ½ cup sugar and butter. Press onto the bottom and 1½ in. up the sides of a greased 9-in. springform pan; set aside. Arrange sliced strawberries over bottom.
3. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese and remaining sugar until smooth. Beat in sweetened condensed milk, cornstarch and reduced Champagne. Add eggs and egg yolks and beat on low speed just until combined. Pour over strawberries. Place pan on a baking sheet.
4. Bake at 325° for 55-60 minutes or until center is almost set. Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully

Making Perfect Cheesecake Every Time

- To avoid lumps, begin with softened cream cheese. To quickly soften 8 oz. cream cheese in the microwave, remove from package and place on a microwave-safe plate; microwave on 50% power for 30-60 seconds or until softened.
- To avoid overbeating—which may cause the cheesecake surface to crack—add lightly beaten eggs all at one time.
- Slice cheesecake when well chilled, but for maximum flavor, allow the slices to stand at room temperature for 15 to 30 minutes before serving.
- For easier slicing, dip knife into a bowl of warm water before slicing each piece. This will allow the knife to slide right through the cheesecake. For perfect slices, clean the knife after each cut.
- To prevent cracks during cooling, loosen the cheesecake from the sides of the pan after baking.

run a knife around edge of pan to loosen; cool 1 hour longer. Refrigerate overnight.

5. Remove sides of springform pan. For topping, wash strawberries and gently pat with paper towels until completely dry. Slice and arrange over cheesecake. In a microwave oven, melt milk chocolate chips and ½ teaspoon shortening; stir until smooth. Drizzle over strawberries. Melt white chocolate chips and remaining shortening in microwave; stir until smooth. Drizzle over strawberries.
6. In a small bowl, beat cream until it begins to thicken. Add confectioners' sugar; beat until soft peaks form. Serve with cheesecake.



MORE ONLINE

See how to make cheesecake at [tasteofhome.com/cheesecakevideo](https://www.tasteofhome.com/cheesecakevideo). Find more cheesecake recipes at [tasteofhome.com/cheesecake](https://www.tasteofhome.com/cheesecake).

The Basics of Pies & Tarts

Pies and tarts always make delicious desserts, perhaps because they often feature juicy fruit, decadent custard or creamy pudding fillings.

Pies and tarts can use similar fillings and crusts, but they differ in that tarts are quite shallow, typically 1 inch high. They can be rectangular or round and large or even bite size. Pies are usually 9 inches in diameter with a single or double crust made from pastry, crumbs or even meringue. Regardless of which you prefer, pies and tarts offer so much variety, you're sure to find a special favorite in this colorful section.

Secrets for Successful Pie Pastry

- Classic pie pastry recipes are prepared with solid shortening. Lard, butter-flavored shortening or butter can be used for plain shortening if desired.
- Measure ingredients accurately, using the measuring tools and techniques suggested on pages 7 and 8.
- Use all-purpose or pastry flour for pie crusts. Bread or cake flour will not give the desired texture to the crust.
- Combine flour and salt thoroughly before adding the shortening and water.
- Be sure to use ice-cold water. Place about ½ cup water in a glass measuring cup and some ice cubes.
- The key to a flaky crust is to avoid overmixing when adding the water. Overmixing causes the gluten in flour to develop, making the pastry tough.
- Chill pie pastry dough for 30 minutes before rolling to make it easier to handle. Pie pastry can be made 1 or 2 days before using. Shape it into a flat disk, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate.
- A floured surface is essential to prevent sticking when rolling out pastry. A floured pastry cloth and rolling pin will keep the pastry from sticking and minimize the amount of flour used.
- Pie pastry can also be rolled out between two sheets of waxed paper. When the pastry dough is rolled out, just peel off the top sheet, invert it into the pie plate and peel off remaining waxed paper.
- Gently ease the pie pastry into the pie plate. Stretching it will cause it to shrink during baking.
- Choose dull-finish aluminum or glass pie plates for crisp crusts. Shiny pans can produce soggy crusts.
- Because of the high fat content in a pastry, do not grease the pie plate unless the recipe directs.
- Never prick the bottom of a pastry crust when the filling and crust are to be baked together.
- Arrange oven racks so the pie will be in the center of the oven. Preheat the oven for 10-15 minutes before baking.
- If the edge of the crust is browning too quickly, shield the edge with a ring of foil. Cool pies on a wire rack.

Pies & Tarts



Making and Shaping Single- and Double-Crust Pie Pastry

1. Combine flour and salt in a bowl. With a pastry blender or two knives, cut in shortening until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs (the size of small peas).
2. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of cold water at a time over the mixture and toss gently with a fork. Repeat until the dry ingredients are moist and mixture forms a ball. Use only as much water as necessary to moisten the flour.
3. Shape into a ball. (For a double-crust pie, divide pastry in half so that one ball is slightly larger than the other.) On a floured surface or floured pastry cloth, flatten the ball (the larger one, if making a double-crust pie) into a circle, pressing together any cracks or breaks.
4. Roll with a floured rolling pin from the center of the pastry to the edges, forming a circle 2 in. larger than the pie plate. The pastry should be about $\frac{1}{8}$ in. thick.
5. To move pastry to the pie plate, roll up onto the rolling pin. Position over the edge of pie plate and unroll. Let the pastry ease into the plate. Do not stretch the pastry to fit. For a single-crust pie, trim

pastry with a scissors to $\frac{1}{2}$ in. beyond plate edge; turn under and flute as in step 8. For a double-crust pie, trim pastry even with the edge of plate. For a lattice-crust pie, trim pastry to 1 in. beyond plate edge. Either bake the shell or fill according to directions.

6. For a double-crust pie, roll out second ball into a 12-in. circle about $\frac{1}{8}$ in. thick. Roll up pastry onto the rolling pin; position over filling. With a knife, cut several slits in top to allow steam to escape while baking.
7. With scissors, trim top pastry to 1 in. beyond plate edge. Fold top pastry over bottom pastry.
8. To flute the edge, position your thumb on the inside of the crust. Place your thumb and index finger of your other hand on the outside edge and pinch pastry around your thumb to form a V shape and seal the dough together. Continue around the edge. Bake according to recipe directions.



Never-Fail Pie Crust

Even novice bakers who shy away from homemade pie pastry can't go wrong with this recipe. It is easy to roll out and produces a tender crust every time.

—**RUTH GRITTER**
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

PREP: 10 MIN. + CHILLING

YIELD: PASTRY FOR A SINGLE- OR DOUBLE-CRUST PIE (9 OR 10 INCHES)

INGREDIENTS FOR SINGLE-CRUST PIE:

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup shortening
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons white vinegar
- 2 to 3 tablespoons 2% milk

INGREDIENTS FOR DOUBLE-CRUST PIE:

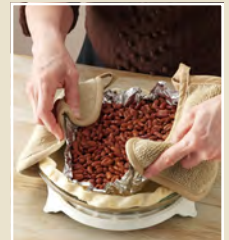
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup shortening
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar
- 5 to 6 tablespoons 2% milk

1. In a small bowl, combine the flour and salt; cut in shortening until mixture is crumbly. Sprinkle with vinegar. Gradually add the milk, tossing with a fork until a ball is formed. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes or until easy to handle.
2. For a single crust, roll out pastry on a lightly floured surface to fit a 9-in. or 10-in. pie plate. Transfer pastry to pie plate. Trim pastry $\frac{1}{2}$ in.

Prebaking a Pastry Shell

1. After placing pastry in the pie plate and fluting edges, line unpricked shell with a double thickness of heavy-duty foil or parchment paper. If desired, fill with dried beans, uncooked rice or pie weights. This will keep the crust from puffing up, shrinking and slipping down the pie plate during baking.

2. Bake at 450° for 8 minutes. With oven mitts, carefully remove the foil and beans, rice or weights. Bake 5-6 minutes longer or until light golden brown. Cool on a wire rack. Let beans or rice cool, then store. They may be reused for pie weights, but cannot be cooked and used in recipes.



Freezing Pie Pastry

- Roll out pastry and place in a pie plate; trim and flute edges. Freeze until firm. Transfer from pie plate to a freezer storage bag and freeze. Can bake frozen at 450° for 15-20 minutes.
- Or roll out pastry as desired on waxed paper. Roll up pastry in waxed paper. Trim excess paper. Place in a freezer bag and freeze. Thaw before using.
- Pastry may be frozen for about 3 months.



Fresh Raspberry Pie

This pretty raspberry pie was practically a staple at our house during the late summer. Our family had raspberry bushes, so the pie was always made with fresh-picked berries.

—EMILY DENNIS HANCOCK, MICHIGAN

PREP: 35 MIN. + CHILLING

BAKE: 50 MIN. + COOLING

YIELD: 6-8 SERVINGS

2 cups all-purpose flour

1 tablespoon sugar

½ teaspoon salt

¾ cup shortening

1 egg, lightly beaten

3 tablespoons cold water

1 tablespoon white vinegar

FILLING:

1⅓ cups sugar

2 tablespoons quick-cooking tapioca

2 tablespoons cornstarch

5 cups fresh or frozen unsweetened raspberries, thawed

1 tablespoon butter

TOPPING:

1 tablespoon 2% milk

1 tablespoon sugar

1. In a large bowl, combine the flour, sugar and salt; cut in shortening until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Combine the egg, water and vinegar; stir into flour mixture just until moistened. Divide dough in half so that one ball is slightly larger than the other; wrap each in plastic wrap. Refrigerate for 30 minutes or until easy to handle.

2. Meanwhile, in another large bowl,

combine the sugar, tapioca, cornstarch and raspberries; let stand for 15 minutes.

3. On a lightly floured surface, roll out larger ball of dough to fit a 9-in. pie plate. Transfer dough to pie plate; trim even with edge. Add raspberry filling; dot with butter.

4. Roll out remaining dough to fit top of pie; place over filling. Trim, seal and flute edges. Cut slits in top. Brush with milk; sprinkle with sugar.

5. Bake at 350° for 50-55 minutes or until crust is golden brown and filling is bubbly. Cool on a wire rack.

Protecting Pastry Edges from Overbrowning

1. The edges of a pie pastry often brown before the rest of the pie is thoroughly baked. To protect the edges, fold a 12-in. piece of foil in quarters. Place the folded corner toward you. Measure 3¾ in. up each adjacent side and cut out an arc joining the two sides. Discard the center.

2. Unfold the remaining foil and place it over the unbaked pie. Trim corners if necessary. Gently crimp foil around edge of crust to secure. Bake the pie for 20 to 30 minutes before removing the foil. Or add during the final 10 to 20 minutes of baking.



Decorative Pie Crust Edges



1 Ruffle Edge

Use for a single- or double-crust pie. Trim pastry as directed in steps 5 or 7 on page 52. Turn the overhanging pastry under to form the rolled edge. Position your thumb and index finger about 1 in. apart on the edge of the crust, pointing out. Position the index finger on your other hand between the two fingers and gently push the pastry toward the center in an upward direction. Continue around edge.

2 Rope Edge

Use for a single- or double-crust pie. Trim pastry as directed in step 5 or 7 on page 52. Turn the overhanging pastry under to form the rolled edge. Make a fist with one hand and press your thumb at an angle into the pastry. Pinch some of the pastry between your thumb and index finger. Repeat at about ½-in. intervals around the crust. For a looser-looking rope, position your thumb at a wider angle and repeat at 1-in. intervals.

3 Cut Scalloped Edge

Use for a single-crust pie. Line a 9-in. pie plate with the pastry and trim even with edge of pie plate. Hold a teaspoon or tablespoon upside down and roll the tip of the spoon around the edge of the pastry, cutting it. Remove and discard the cut pieces to create a scalloped look.

4 Braided Edge

Use for a single-crust pie. Make enough pastry for a double crust. Line a 9-in. pie plate with the bottom pastry and trim pastry even with edge of pie plate. Roll remaining pastry into a 10-in. x 8-in. rectangle. With a sharp knife, cut twelve ¼-in.-wide strips; gently braid three strips. Brush edge of crust with water; place braid on edge and press lightly to secure. Repeat with remaining strips, until entire edge is covered. Cover with foil to protect edges from overbrowning.

Thickeners for Fruit Pies

- Thickeners help prevent fruit pies from being too runny. All-purpose flour, cornstarch and quick-cooking tapioca are the thickeners commonly used in fruit pies. Flour gives the filling an opaque appearance, cornstarch gives a clear appearance and tapioca gives a clear to almost gel-like appearance.
- One thickener can be substituted for another; however, the thickening power of each is different and you may need

to make adjustments. Equal amounts of quick-cooking tapioca and cornstarch can be substituted for each other. When replacing flour in a recipe, use half the amount of cornstarch or use 1½ to 2 teaspoons of quick-cooking tapioca for every 1 tablespoon of flour. Use the high end of the range if you prefer a filling that is very set.

- When using tapioca, mix it with the filling ingredients and allow the mixture to stand for 15 minutes before proceeding with the recipe.



Stone Fruit Pie

You can use any type of stone fruit in this pie. I love combining white peaches with sour cherries!

—CRYSTAL JO BRUNS ILIFF, COLORADO

PREP: 30 MIN. • **BAKE:** 45 MIN.

YIELD: 8 SERVINGS

- 2 cups fresh or frozen pitted tart cherries, thawed
- 3 medium nectarines, chopped
- 3 apricots, sliced
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch

- 2 tablespoons plus 2 cups all-purpose flour, divided
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons cold butter, divided
- 6 to 7 tablespoons ice water
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 teaspoon water

1. In a small bowl, combine the cherries, nectarines, apricots, sugar, cornstarch, 2 tablespoons flour and cinnamon; set aside.
2. In another bowl, combine salt and remaining flour; cut in $\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter until crumbly. Gradually add ice water, tossing with a fork until dough forms a ball. Divide dough in half. Roll out one half to fit a 9-in. pie plate; transfer pastry to pie plate. Add filling; dot with remaining butter.
3. Roll out remaining pastry; make a lattice crust. Trim, seal and flute edges. In a small bowl, whisk egg yolk and water; brush over lattice top.
4. Bake at 400° for 45-50 minutes or until filling is bubbly and crust is golden brown. Cover edges with foil during the last 15 minutes to prevent overbrowning if necessary. Cool on a wire rack.

Creating a Lattice-Topped Pie

1. Make pastry for a double-crust pie.
2. Line a 9-in. pie plate with the bottom pastry and trim the pastry to 1 in. beyond the edge of the plate.
3. Roll out the remaining pastry to a 12-in. circle. With a fluted pastry wheel, pizza cutter or sharp knife, cut the pastry into $\frac{1}{2}$ -in.- to 1-in.-wide strips. Lay the strips in rows about $\frac{1}{2}$ in. to $\frac{3}{4}$ in. apart. (Use longer strips for the center of the pie and shorter strips for the sides.)
4. Fold every other strip halfway back. Starting at the center, add strips at right angles, lifting every other strip as the cross strips are put down. Continue to add strips, lifting and weaving until lattice top is completed.
5. Trim strips even with pastry edge. Fold bottom pastry up and over ends of strips and seal. Flute the edges.



Chocolate Silk Pie

This creamy, quick chocolate pie not only melts in your mouth, it also melts any and all resistance to dessert! What an easy way to show your sweetie how much you care.

—MARY RELYEA CANASTOTA, NEW YORK

PREP: 30 MIN. + CHILLING

YIELD: 6-8 SERVINGS

- 1 unbaked pastry shell (9 inches)
- 1 jar (7 ounces) marshmallow creme
- 1 cup (6 ounces) semisweet chocolate chips
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter, cubed
- 2 ounces unsweetened chocolate
- 2 tablespoons strong brewed coffee
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream, whipped

TOPPING:

- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar
- Chocolate curls, optional

1. Line unpricked pastry shell with a double thickness of heavy-duty foil. Bake at 450° for 8 minutes. Remove foil; bake 5 minutes longer. Cool on a wire rack.
2. Meanwhile, in a heavy saucepan, combine the marshmallow creme, chocolate chips, butter, unsweetened



chocolate and coffee; cook and stir over low heat until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth. Cool. Fold in whipped cream; pour into crust.

3. For topping, in a large bowl, beat cream until it begins to thicken. Add confectioners' sugar; beat until stiff peaks form. Spread over filling. Refrigerate for at least 3 hours before serving. Garnish with chocolate curls if desired.

4. How-To: For quick chocolate curls, use a vegetable peeler to "peel" curls from a solid block of chocolate. To keep the strips intact, allow them to fall gently onto a plate or a single layer of waxed paper. If you get only shavings, your chocolate may be too hard, so warm it slightly.

Homemade Crumb Crusts

In a mixing bowl, combine the crumbs and sugar; add the melted butter and blend well. Press the mixture onto the bottom and up the sides of an ungreased 9-in. pie plate. Refrigerate for 30 minutes before filling, or bake at 375° for 8-10 minutes or until crust is lightly browned. Cool completely on a wire rack before filling.

For desserts made in a 9-in. springform pan (such as cheesecakes), you may need to add an additional $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup crumbs and 1 tablespoon butter.

TYPE OF CRUST	AMOUNT OF CRUMBS	SUGAR	BUTTER, MELTED
Graham Cracker	$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups (24 squares)	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Chocolate Wafer	$1\frac{1}{4}$ cups (20 wafers)	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Vanilla Wafer	$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups (30 wafers)	none	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Cream-Filled Chocolate	$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups (15 cookies)	none	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Gingersnap	$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups (24 cookies)	none	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Macaroon	$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups	none	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Pretzel (use a greased pie plate)	$1\frac{1}{4}$ cups	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup



Black Forest Tart

Cherry pie filling and a melted chocolate drizzle tastefully top a rich, fudgy cake in this elegant dessert that adds a pinch of panache to any dessert spread.

—TASTE OF HOME TEST KITCHEN

PREP: 35 MIN. + COOLING

BAKE: 25 MIN. + CHILLING

YIELD: 12 SERVINGS

- 1¼ cups chocolate wafer crumbs
- ¼ cup sugar
- ¼ cup butter, melted

FILLING:

- ½ cup butter
- 6 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped
- 3 eggs
- ⅔ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅔ cup all-purpose flour

TOPPING:

- 1 can (21 ounces) cherry pie filling
- 2 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped
- 1 tablespoon heavy whipping cream

Preventing Soggy Tart Crusts

Brush tart crusts with melted jelly before layering with fruit. That will help seal the crust and keep the fruit juices from absorbing into the crust.

1. In a small bowl, combine wafer crumbs and sugar; stir in butter. Press onto the bottom and up the sides of a lightly greased 11-in. fluted tart pan with removable bottom.
2. Place pan on a baking sheet. Bake at 350° for 8-10 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool on a wire rack.
3. In a microwave, melt butter and chocolate; stir until smooth. Cool for 10 minutes. In a large bowl, beat the eggs, sugar, vanilla and salt until thickened, about 4 minutes. Blend in chocolate mixture. Stir in flour and mix well.
4. Pour into crust; spread evenly. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool completely on a wire rack. Spread pie filling over the top.
5. In a microwave, melt chocolate and cream; stir until smooth. Cool for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Drizzle over tart. Chill until set.

Editor's Note: *This tart is best served the day it is prepared.*

Coconut Cream Angel Pie

Mom whipped up this wonderful pie by heart, using an ancient whisk and an old skillet. It turned out perfect every time.

—GINNY WERKMEISTER

TILDEN, NEBRASKA

PREP: 30 MIN. **BAKE:** 20 MIN. + CHILLING

YIELD: 8 SERVINGS

- ½ cup sugar
 - ¼ cup cornstarch
 - ¼ teaspoon salt
 - 2 cups whole milk
 - 3 egg yolks, lightly beaten
 - ½ cup flaked coconut
 - 1 tablespoon butter
 - 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
 - 1 pastry shell (9 inches), baked
- MERINGUE:**
- 3 egg whites
 - ¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
 - ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
 - 6 tablespoons sugar
 - ¼ cup flaked coconut

1. In a small heavy saucepan, combine the sugar, cornstarch and salt. Add milk; stir until smooth. Cook and stir over medium-high heat until thickened and bubbly. Reduce heat to low; cook and stir for 2 minutes longer.
2. Remove from the heat. Stir a small amount of hot filling into egg yolks; return all to the pan, stirring constantly. Bring to a gentle boil; cook and stir 2 minutes longer. Remove from the heat; stir in the coconut, butter and vanilla. Pour into prepared shell.
3. In a small bowl, beat the egg whites, cream of tartar and vanilla on medium speed until soft peaks form. Gradually beat in sugar, 1 tablespoon at a time, on high until stiff peaks form. Spread meringue over hot filling, sealing edges to crust. Sprinkle with coconut.
4. Bake at 350° for 17-20 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on a wire rack for 1 hour. Refrigerate for at least 3 hours before serving. Store leftovers in the refrigerator.



Common Pie Conundrums

Crust is not flaky

- The shortening was cut in too much. Cut in shortening so it resembles coarse crumbs, and don't cut any smaller.

Crust is tough and/or has shrunk

- The pastry was overhandled.
- Too much water was used. Stir in only enough water to moisten the flour so a ball forms.

Crust is soggy

- For a single-crust pie, prebake the crust before filling next time.
- Before adding the filling, brush the crust with a beaten egg white, then bake.
- Add the filling to the crust right before baking it.

Crust is burnt in spots

- Make sure the crust is rolled out evenly.

- Your oven may bake unevenly. Next time, rotate the pie during baking.

Pie bubbles over

- Too much filling was used. Reduce the amount of your filling or use a deep-dish pie plate.
- Drain off some juice from fruit pies before placing the filling in the crust.

Meringue shrunk during baking

- Be sure to seal the meringue to the edge of the pastry before baking.

Beads formed on top of the meringue and/or the meringue is sticky

- Meringue was baked at too high a temperature or was underbaked.
- For best results, meringue should not be made on a humid or rainy day.



Strawberry Tart

Looking for the perfect ending to any summertime meal? Here's a swift-to-fix, creamy strawberry tart that boasts a crunchy chocolate layer tucked next to the crust. You could also make individual tartlets instead of one big one.

—DAWN TRINGALI
HAMILTON SQUARE, NEW JERSEY

PREP: 20 MIN. • **BAKE:** 10 MIN. + CHILLING
YIELD: 6-8 SERVINGS

- 1 sheet refrigerated pie pastry
- 3 ounces German sweet chocolate, melted
- 2 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese, softened
- 3 tablespoons heavy whipping cream
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1¾ cups confectioners' sugar
- 2½ cups sliced fresh strawberries
- ¼ cup red currant jelly

1. Press pastry onto the bottom and up the sides of an ungreased 9-in. fluted tart pan with a removable bottom. Place on a baking sheet. Bake at 450° for 10-12 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on a wire rack.
2. Spread melted chocolate over bottom of crust. Cover and refrigerate for 5-10 minutes or until almost set. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, beat the cream cheese,

cream and vanilla until smooth. Gradually beat in confectioners' sugar. Spread over chocolate layer.

3. Arrange strawberries over filling; brush with jelly. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours. Remove sides of pan before serving.

Cinnamon Pumpkin Pie

This recipe is a breeze to make. My daughter, Jessica, claims this is the best pumpkin pie she's ever eaten!

—JACQUELINE DEIBERT
KLINGERSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

PREP: 10 MIN. • **BAKE:** 55 MIN. + COOLING
YIELD: 6 SERVINGS

- 1 cup sugar
- 4 teaspoons cornstarch
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 can (15 ounces) solid-pack pumpkin
- 1 cup milk
- 1 unbaked pastry shell (9 inches) Whipped cream in a can, optional

1. In a small bowl, combine the sugar, cornstarch, salt and cinnamon. In a large bowl, combine the eggs, pumpkin and sugar mixture. Gradually stir in milk. Pour into pastry shell.
2. Bake at 400° for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 350°; bake 45-50 minutes longer or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack. Top with whipped cream if desired. Refrigerate leftovers.



Sweet & Salty Truffle Pie

This truffle pie is too good to resist!

—SHIRLEY WARREN
THIENSVILLE, WISCONSIN

PREP: 1 HOUR 10 MIN. + CHILLING
BAKE: 13 MIN. • **YIELD:** 8 SERVINGS

- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
 - ¾ teaspoon salt
 - ½ cup shortening
 - 3 tablespoons cold water
 - 1½ teaspoons white vinegar
- TRUFFLES**
- 2 cups dark chocolate chips, divided
 - ⅓ cup heavy whipping cream
 - ½ cup crushed pretzels
 - 1 tablespoon shortening
 - 2 teaspoons coarse sugar
 - ½ teaspoon kosher salt

FILLING

- 1½ cups semisweet chocolate chips, divided
- 1¼ cups heavy whipping cream, divided
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 egg yolks
- ¼ cup butter, softened
- 2 tablespoons vanilla extract

TOPPING

- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
 - 3 tablespoons confectioners' sugar
 - ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- Broken pretzels

1. In a bowl combine flour and salt; cut in shortening. Combine water and vinegar; gradually add to flour. Toss with a fork until dough forms a ball. Wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate for 1 hour.
2. Roll out pastry to fit a 9-in. pie plate. Transfer pastry to pie plate. Trim pastry to ½ in. beyond edge of plate; flute edges. Line pastry with a double thickness of heavy-duty foil. Fill with dried beans, uncooked rice or pie weights.
3. Bake at 450° for 8 minutes. Remove foil and weights; bake 5-7 minutes longer. Cool on a wire rack.
4. For truffles, melt 1 cup dark chocolate chips in microwave; stir until smooth. Gradually stir in cream. Stir in pretzels. Cool to room temperature,



stirring occasionally. Refrigerate until firm. Shape into 24 1-in. balls.

5. In a microwave, melt shortening and remaining dark chips; stir until smooth. Combine coarse sugar and kosher salt. Dip truffles in chocolate mixture; allow excess to drip off. Place on waxed paper; sprinkle with sugar mixture. Refrigerate for 1 hour or until set.
6. For filling, place ⅓ cup semisweet chips in a bowl. In a saucepan, bring ¼ cup cream just to a boil. Pour over chocolate; whisk until smooth. Pour into crust. Refrigerate for 15 minutes.
7. Meanwhile, in a small heavy saucepan, cook and stir sugar, remaining chocolate chips and remaining cream over medium heat until smooth. Whisk small amount into egg yolks. Return all to pan, stirring constantly. Cook and stir over low heat until mixture reaches 160°.
8. Pour into a large bowl; stir in butter and vanilla. Place bowl in an ice-water bath, stirring frequently until cooled. Remove bowl from ice water. Beat mixture until stiff peaks form. Spread into crust; chill completely.
9. For topping, in a bowl, beat cream until it starts to thicken. Add confectioners' sugar and vanilla; beat until soft peaks form. Spoon over filling; top with truffles and broken pretzels. Serve with remaining truffles.



The Basics of Cookies, Bars & Brownies

From timeless chip-filled classics to rich, fudgy sensations, cookies, bars and brownies are the perfect handheld treats. What other baked goodies stir up heartwarming memories of licking the dough off the beaters when Mom wasn't looking?

Cookies started out as little cakes used to test the oven temperature before the larger cake was baked. In fact, the word cookie is derived from the Dutch word “koekje,” meaning little cake. Cookies are grouped into five basic categories according to how they're shaped: drop, shaped, refrigerator, cutout and bar.

Bars and brownies are easy to make but difficult to define since they can be made in endless variations. They can be crisp with a rich, buttery shortbread crust, cake-like or fudgy. They can have layers, fruit, jam or a cooked filling and be topped with frosting or glaze. Best of all, they can steal the show from an elegant meal or be deliciously humble like a chocolate chip cookie bar.

Secrets for Successful Cookies, Bars & Brownies

- Use butter, stick margarine (with at least 80% oil) or shortening. Whipped, tub, soft, liquid or reduced-fat products contain air and water and will produce flat and tough products.
- Use heavy-gauge dull aluminum baking sheets with one or two low sides. When a recipe calls for greased baking sheets, use shortening or cooking spray. Dark finishes may cause cookies to over-brown.
- For even baking, make cookies the same size and thickness.
- Unless the recipe states otherwise, place cookie dough 2 to 3 in. apart on a cool baking sheet.
- Leave at least 2 in. around the baking sheet and the oven walls for good heat circulation. For best results, bake only one sheet of cookies at a time. If you need to bake two sheets at once, switch the position of the baking sheets halfway through the baking time.
- Unless otherwise directed, let cookies cool for 1 minute on the baking sheet before removing to a wire rack. Cool completely before storing.
- Let baking sheets cool before placing the next batch of cookie dough on them. The heat from warm baking sheets will soften the dough and cause it to spread.
- Avoid overmixing the batter. If it's handled too much, the gluten in the flour will be developed and the product will be tough.
- Use dull aluminum baking pans or glass dishes. Dark-colored pans may cause overbrowning.
- It's important to evenly spread batter in the pan. If one corner is thinner than another, it will overbake.
- Use a kitchen timer. Check treats when the minimum baking time has been reached, baking longer if needed. Follow doneness tests given in individual recipes.

Cookies, Bars & Brownies



Chocolate Drop Cookies

These soft, cake-like cookies topped with a creamy cocoa frosting have a pleasant walnut flavor. The recipe makes a lot, so there are plenty of these chocolaty treats to share.

—**BETH MORE** LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

PREP: 45 MIN. • **BAKE:** 10 MIN./BATCH +
COOLING • **YIELD:** 4½ DOZEN

- ½ cup butter, softened
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 egg
- ½ cup milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 ounces unsweetened chocolate, melted and cooled
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup chopped walnuts

FROSTING:

- 2 cups confectioners' sugar
- ¼ cup baking cocoa
- ¼ cup butter, softened
- ¼ cup hot strong brewed coffee
- ¾ teaspoon vanilla extract

1. In a large bowl, cream butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in the egg, milk and vanilla. Beat in chocolate until blended. Combine the flour, baking soda and salt; gradually add to creamed mixture and mix well. Stir in the walnuts.
2. Drop by tablespoonfuls 2 in. apart onto greased baking sheets. Bake at 350° for 8-10 minutes or until set. Cool on pans for 1 minute before removing to wire racks to cool completely.
3. In a large bowl, beat the frosting ingredients until smooth. Frost cookies.

Tips for Making Drop Cookies

- If your mixer begins to strain because the cookie dough is too thick, use a wooden spoon to stir in the last of the flour or ingredients such as nuts, chips or dried fruit.
- For even baking, it's important that you make cookies the same size. Use a teaspoon or tablespoon from your flatware set or a small ice cream scoop.
- Drop cookies generally melt and spread during baking. But sometimes, a recipe may instruct you to flatten the cookies with the bottom of a glass dipped in sugar or with a fork, making a crisscross pattern.

Chocolate Chunk Shortbread

Chocolate is a nice addition to shortbread, as this scrumptious recipe proves. The shortbread cookies are delicious served with a cold glass of milk.

—**BRENDA MUMMA** AIRDRIE, ALBERTA

PREP: 20 MIN. • **BAKE:** 30 MIN./BATCH
YIELD: ABOUT 3½ DOZEN

- ¾ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup confectioners' sugar
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup cornstarch
- 3 ounces semisweet chocolate, coarsely chopped
- Additional confectioners' sugar

1. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Combine flour and cornstarch; gradually add to creamed mixture and mix well. Stir in chocolate.
2. Shape into 1-in. balls. Place 1 in. apart on ungreased baking sheets. Flatten with a glass dipped in confectioners' sugar.
3. Bake at 300° for 30-33 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Remove to wire racks to cool.



Tips for Making Shaped Cookies

- Refrigerate the dough until it is chilled for easier handling. If there is a high butter content in the dough, the heat from your hands can soften the butter in the dough, making it harder to shape.
- Dust hands lightly with flour to prevent dough from sticking while shaping it.

Removing from Baking Sheets

If your cookies crumble when removed from a baking sheet, let them cool for 1 to 2 minutes first. But if they cool too long, they become hard and can break when removed. If this happens, return the baking sheet to the oven to warm the cookies slightly so they'll release more easily.

Tips for Cutout Cookies

- Use a light touch when handling the dough; overhandling will cause the cookies to be tough.
- To make it easier to roll out the dough, refrigerate first. This is especially true if the dough was made with butter rather than shortening.
- Lightly dust the rolling pin and work surface with flour to prevent sticking. Working too much extra flour into the dough will result in tough cookies.
- Roll out a portion of the dough at a time and keep the remaining dough in the refrigerator. Roll out from the center to the edge, keeping a uniform thickness and checking the thickness with a ruler. If the thickness of the dough is uneven, the cookies will bake unevenly. Thinner cookies will be crisp and may burn, while thicker cookies will be chewy.
- To prevent the dough from sticking to the cookie cutter, dip the cutter in flour or coat it with cooking spray.
- After the dough is rolled out, position the shapes from the cookie cutters close together to avoid having too many scraps. Save all the scraps and reroll them just once to prevent tough cookies.
- To keep the cutouts intact before and after baking, transfer them to and from the baking sheet with a large metal spatula or pancake turner that fully supports the entire cutout.



Almond Oatmeal Cutouts

Almond gives these cutout oatmeal cookies added flavor. The dough is slightly sticky, so roll out the dough between pieces of waxed flavor.

—**MARTHA DAHLMAN**
REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN

PREP/TOTAL TIME: 30 MIN.
YIELD: 2½ DOZEN

- ½ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup shortening
- ¾ cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons almond extract
- 1¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 1¼ cups old-fashioned oats

1. In a large bowl, cream the butter, shortening and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in extract. Combine flour and oats; gradually add to creamed mixture and mix well.
2. Roll out between waxed paper to ¼-in. thickness. Cut with a floured 2½-in. cookie cutters.
3. Place 1 in. apart on ungreased baking sheets. Bake at 350° for 12-15 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove to wire racks to cool.

Peanut Butter Cookies

My mother insisted that my grandmother write down one recipe for her when she got married in 1942. That was a real effort because Grandma was a traditional pioneer-type cook who used “a little of this or that ‘til it feels right.” This treasured recipe is the only one she ever wrote down!

—**JANET HALL CLINTON**, WISCONSIN

PREP: 15 MIN. • **BAKE:** 10 MIN./BATCH
YIELD: 3 DOZEN

- 1 cup shortening
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 3 eggs
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt

1. In a large bowl, cream shortening, peanut butter and sugars until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Combine the flour, baking soda and salt; add to creamed mixture and mix well.
2. Roll into 1½-in. balls. Place 3 in. apart on ungreased baking sheets. Flatten with a fork or meat mallet if desired. Bake at 375° for 10-15 minutes. Remove to wire racks.



Common Cookie Baking Conundrums

Cookies are spreading too much

- Place the dough on a cool baking sheet.
- Chill the dough before baking.
- Next time, replace part of the butter in the recipe with shortening. If using margarine, check the label and make sure it contains 80% vegetable oil.

Cookies are not spreading enough

- Add 1 to 2 tablespoons of liquid, such as milk or water, to the remaining dough.
- Let the dough stand at room temperature before baking.
- Next time, use butter, not margarine or shortening.

Cookies are tough

- Too much flour was worked into the dough. Add 1 or 2 tablespoons of shortening, butter or sugar to the remaining dough.
- The dough was overhandled or overmixed. Next time, use a lighter touch when mixing.

Cookies are too brown

- Oven temperature is too high. Check with an oven thermometer.
- Use heavy-gauge dull aluminum baking sheets. Dark baking sheets will cause the cookies to become overbrowned.

Cookies are too pale

- Oven temperature is too low. Check with an oven thermometer.
- Use heavy-gauge dull aluminum baking sheets. Insulated baking sheets can cause cookies to be pale in color.
- Next time, use butter, not margarine or shortening.



Caramel Brownies

I love to cook. My family can't possibly eat all of the sweets I whip up, so my co-workers are more than happy to sample them—particularly these rich, chewy brownies that are full of gooey caramel, chocolate chips and crunchy walnuts.

—CLARA BAKKE

COON RAPIDS, MINNESOTA

PREP: 20 MIN. • **BAKE:** 35 MIN. + COOLING

YIELD: 2 DOZEN

- 2 cups sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup baking cocoa
- 1 cup canola oil
- 4 eggs
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup 2% milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 cup (6 ounces) semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 cup chopped walnuts, divided
- 1 package (14 ounces) caramels
- 1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk

1. In a large bowl, beat the sugar, cocoa, oil, eggs and milk. Combine the flour, salt and baking powder; gradually add to egg mixture until well blended. Fold in chocolate chips and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup walnuts.

2. Spoon two-thirds of the batter into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. baking pan. Bake at 350° for 12 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, in a large saucepan, heat the caramels and condensed milk over low heat until caramels are melted. Pour over baked brownie layer. Sprinkle with remaining walnuts.

4. Drop remaining batter by teaspoonfuls over the caramel layer; carefully swirl the brownie batter with a knife.

5. Bake 35-40 minutes longer or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out with moist crumbs (do not overbake). Cool on a wire rack.

Cutting Bars into Triangles

Triangle-shaped bars give a festive look to a cookie platter. Simply cut the bars into squares, then cut each square in half diagonally.



Peanut Jelly Bars

Twice as nice! A layer of grape jelly between a peanut-oatmeal crust and topping gives these bars the flavor of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

—SONJA BLOW REEDS SPRING, MISSOURI

PREP: 20 MIN. • **BAKE:** 25 MIN.

YIELD: 2 DOZEN

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter, softened
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cups quick-cooking oats
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped salted peanuts
- 1 jar (12 ounces) grape jelly

1. In a large bowl, cream butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy. Combine the flour, salt and baking soda; gradually add to creamed mixture just until combined. Stir in oats and peanuts (mixture will be crumbly).

2. Press half of the mixture into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. baking pan. Spread with jelly. Cover with the remaining crumb mixture.

3. Bake at 400° for 25 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on a wire rack. Cut into bars.



Common Bar & Brownie Baking Conundrums

Baked unevenly

- The batter wasn't spread evenly in the pan.
- The oven rack wasn't level.

Are overbaked

- A pan larger than called for in the recipe was used, causing the batter to be thin and dry.
- Oven temperature is too high. Check with an oven thermometer.
- Next time, check the bars 5 minutes sooner than the baking time given in the recipe.

Are gummy

- A pan smaller than called for in the recipe was used.

Are tough

- Stir in dry ingredients with a wooden spoon and don't overmix, which can develop the gluten in the flour and cause the bars to be tough.

Have a soggy crust

- The crust was not baked long enough before placing the filling on top.

Have a crumbly crust

- Next time, cut in a little more butter so that the crust will stick together.

Crumble when they are cut

- Cool the bars completely before cutting them.
- Use a sawing motion when cutting.
- Warm the blade of knife in hot water, dry, then cut. Clean and rewarm the knife after each cut.



Nutty Butter Munchies

I developed this recipe for a crisp cookie as a way to satisfy my sweet tooth. Peanuts and pecans are abundant here in Louisiana, so I bake with them often.

—ZENOLA FRAZIER TALLULAH, LOUISIANA

PREP: 15 MIN. • **BAKE:** 10 MIN./BATCH
YIELD: 8½ DOZEN

- 1 cup butter, softened
- ½ cup chunky peanut butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon almond extract
- 3 cups all-purpose flour

- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1½ cups chopped pecans
- ½ cup salted peanuts

1. In a large bowl, cream the butter, peanut butter and sugars until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in extracts. Combine the flour, baking soda and salt; gradually add to the creamed mixture and mix well. Stir in nuts.
2. Drop by tablespoonfuls 2 in. apart onto greased baking sheets. Flatten with a glass dipped in sugar. Bake at 350° for 10-12 minutes or until the edges are lightly browned. Remove to wire racks to cool.

Lacy Brandy Snaps

These captivating, fluff-filled crisps are the perfect “little something sweet.”

—NATALIE BREMSON
PLANTATION, FLORIDA

PREP: 30 MIN. • **BAKE:** 10 MIN./BATCH +
COOLING • **YIELD:** 4 DOZEN

- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cubed
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 3 tablespoons light corn syrup
- ¾ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons brandy
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger

FILLING:

- 4 cups heavy whipping cream
- 1¾ cups confectioners' sugar
- ½ cup brandy
- Grated semisweet chocolate, optional

1. In a small saucepan, combine the butter, sugar and corn syrup. Cook and stir over medium heat until butter is melted. Remove from the heat. Stir in the flour, brandy and ginger.
2. Drop by teaspoonfuls, three at a time, 3 in. apart onto a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Bake at 350° for 7-8 minutes or until golden brown. Cool for 30-45 seconds. Working quickly, loosen each cookie and curl around a thick wooden spoon handle. (If cookies become too cool to shape, return to oven for 1 minute to soften.) Remove to wire rack to cool completely.
3. For filling, in a large bowl, beat cream until it begins to thicken. Add confectioners' sugar and brandy; beat until stiff peaks form. Just before serving, pipe cream mixture into cookies. Sprinkle ends with chocolate if desired. Refrigerate leftovers.



We made this recipe using **both inexpensive and high-quality brandies** to compare the taste. Although the cookies looked identical, we found that **the expensive brandies really did taste better**—and had a more pronounced flavor—in the whipped cream filling.

On a Roll with Brandy Snaps

While cookies are hot and pliable, gently roll each around a wooden spoon handle. Press to secure; allow cylinder to cool on handle before sliding off. Heat-sensitive hands? Rub fingers quickly over ice cubes before rolling hot cookies.





Giant Molasses Cookies

My family always requests these soft and deliciously chewy cookies.

—KRISTINE CHAYES
SMITHTOWN, NEW YORK

PREP: 30 MIN. • **BAKE:** 16 MIN./BATCH
YIELD: 2 DOZEN

- 1½ cups butter, softened
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 eggs
- ½ cup molasses
- 4½ cups all-purpose flour
- 4 teaspoons ground ginger
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup chopped pecans
- ¾ cup coarse sugar

1. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs and molasses. Combine the flour, ginger, baking soda, cinnamon, cloves and salt; gradually add to creamed mixture and mix well. Fold in pecans.
2. Shape into 2-in. balls and roll in coarse sugar. Place 2½-in. apart on ungreased baking sheets. Bake at 400° for 16-18 minutes or until tops are cracked. Remove to wire racks to cool.



A little taste of home arrived for, from left, Lance Cpls. Dean, Stauber and Antoine, who are serving abroad.

Cookies for the Troops

Sometimes, people we love are just too far away to smell the homey aroma of cookies emanating from our ovens—so we have to do our very best to bring that cozy smell to them. *Taste of Home* sent big batches of our Giant Molasses Cookies to troops serving overseas, making sure they arrived in good shape, still tasting fresh and smelling like home. According to Marine Lance Cpls. Luke Stauber of Evansville, Indiana, Francis Antoine of Washington, D.C., and Redrick Dean of Elyria, Ohio, the cookies were a hit, stirring up memories of being home for the holidays.



Vanilla Chip Cranberry Blondies

We created these delicious blondies sure to satisfy any health-conscious cook. Applesauce moistens the batter, while colorful dried cranberries, white chips and heart-healthy pecans flavor each bite.

—TASTE OF HOME TEST KITCHEN

PREP: 15 MIN. • **BAKE:** 15 MIN. + COOLING
YIELD: 20 BARS

- 2 eggs
- ¼ cup canola oil
- ¼ cup unsweetened applesauce
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup dried cranberries, divided
- ½ cup white baking chips
- ½ cup chopped pecans

1. In a large bowl, beat the eggs, oil, applesauce and vanilla. Combine the flour, brown sugar, baking powder and salt; stir into the egg mixture until blended. Stir in ½ cup cranberries (batter will be thick).
2. Spread into a 13-in. x 9-in. baking pan coated with cooking spray. Top with chips, pecans and remaining cranberries; gently press toppings down.
3. Bake at 350° for 15-20 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack. Cut into bars.

Coconut Cookies

Guaranteed to make you think of warm spring breezes, these crispy coconut cookies couldn't be easier to whip up. We've enjoyed them for years, and now our grandchildren ask for them in their college care packages.

—ALEY THORNE
LOS MOLINOS, CALIFORNIA

PREP/TOTAL TIME: 25 MIN. • **YIELD:** 2 DOZEN

- ½ cup shortening
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup packed brown sugar
- 1 egg
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup crisp rice cereal
- ½ cup flaked coconut

1. In a bowl, cream shortening and sugars. Add egg and vanilla; mix well. Combine flour and baking soda; add to the creamed mixture and mix well. Stir in cereal and coconut.
2. Roll into 24 balls; place 2 in. apart on greased baking sheets. Bake at 350° for 8-10 minutes or until lightly browned and set. Cool for 2 minutes before removing to wire racks.

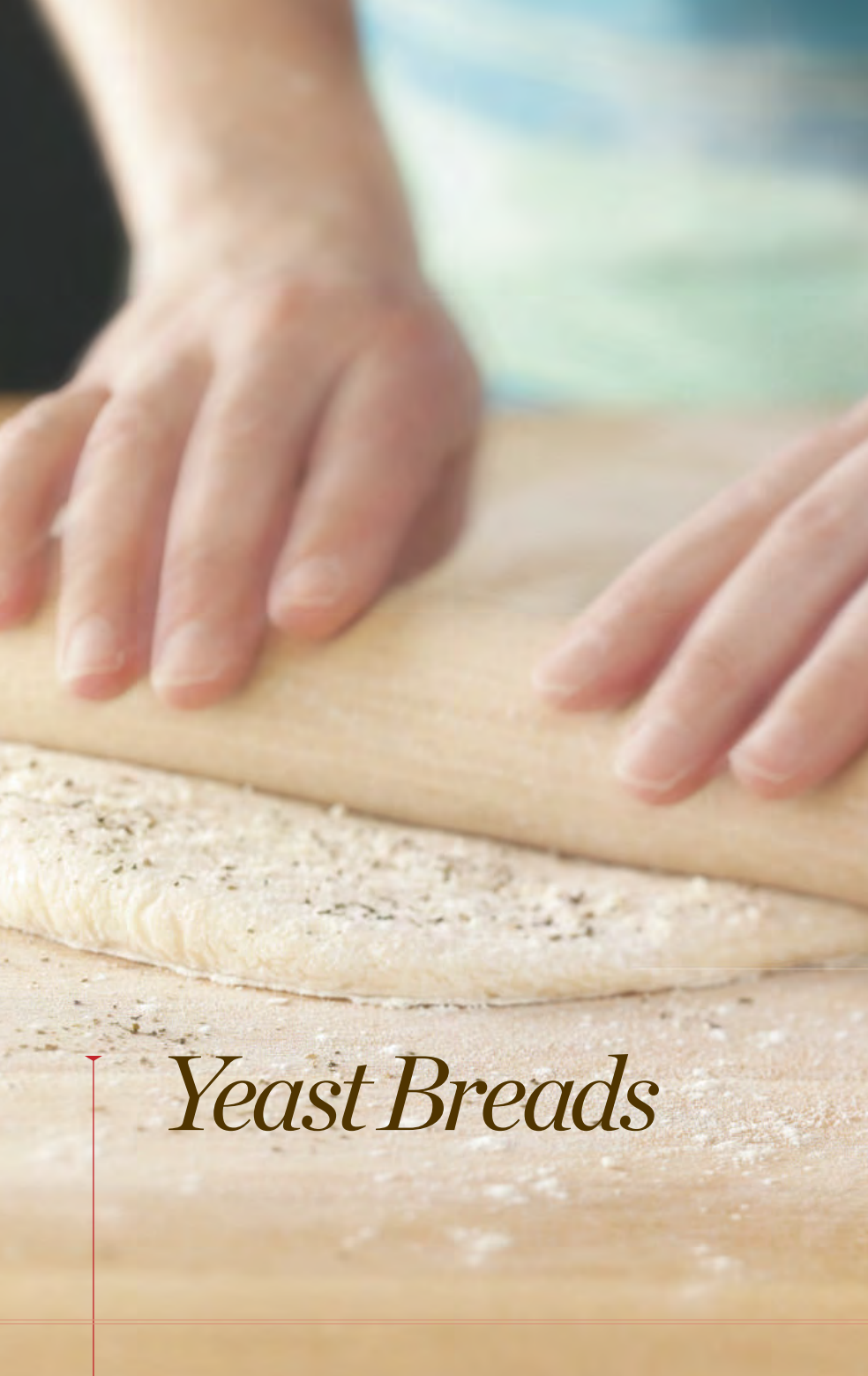
Cutting Bars & Brownies

With a knife, use a gentle swaying motion. Remove the corner piece first. Then the rest will be easier to remove.

For perfectly sized bars, lay a clean ruler on top of the bars and make cut marks with the tip of the knife. Use the edge of the ruler as a cutting guide.

For basic bars and brownies (those without soft fillings or toppings), line the pan with foil before baking. When cool, lift the foil from the pan. Trim the edges of the bars or brownies, then cut into bars, squares or diamonds.

An 8-in. square pan will yield 16 (2-in.) squares or 64 (1-in.) squares. A 9-in. square pan will yield 54 (1½-in. x 1-in.) bars or 81 (1-in.) squares. A 13-in. x 9-in. pan will yield 78 (1½-in. x 1-in.) bars.



Yeast Breads

The Basics of Yeast Breads

Yeast breads can be made completely from scratch, can start with convenience products, such as frozen bread dough or hot roll mix, and can even be made in a bread machine. They can be savory (like the recipes here) or sweet (like the recipes in the Coffee Cakes & Sweet Rolls section beginning on page 94). The recipes featured here are classified as kneaded breads. Kneaded breads are usually mixed, kneaded, allowed to rise, shaped, allowed to rise again and finally baked. Rise times may be shortened or one may be eliminated if quick-rise yeast is used.

Secrets for Successful Yeast Breads

- Use butter, stick margarine (with at least 80% oil) or shortening. Do not use light or whipped butter, diet spread or tub margarine.
- Measure ingredients accurately, using the measuring tools and techniques suggested on pages 7 and 8.
- Arrange the oven racks so that the bread will bake in the center of the oven. Preheat oven for 10 to 15 minutes before baking.
- When mixing dough, always start with a minimum amount of flour until dough reaches desired consistency (soft, sticky, stiff or firm).
- Knead dough only until it does not tear easily when stretched.
- Let dough rise in a warm (80° to 85°) draft-free area. Proper rising helps in the development of the bread's texture.
- Use aluminum pans with a dull rather than shiny or dark finish. Glass baking dishes and dark finishes will produce darker crusts.
- To allow for good air circulation while baking, leave at least 1 in. of space between pans and sides of oven.
- Use a kitchen timer and test for doneness at the minimum recommended baking time. Bread is done when it is golden brown and sounds hollow when tapped on the bottom. Or insert an instant-read thermometer in the thickest part of the loaf. The bread is done when the thermometer reads 200°.
- Remove breads from pans and cool on wire racks. Cool for at least 20 minutes before slicing. Use a serrated knife and a sawing motion when cutting.
- Storing yeast breads is a cinch. Simply cool unsliced yeast bread completely before placing in an airtight container or resealable plastic bag. Yeast bread will stay fresh at room temperature for 2 to 3 days.
- Bread with cheese or other perishable ingredients should be stored in the refrigerator. For longer storage, freeze bread in an airtight container or resealable plastic bag for up to 3 months.

Kneading, Shaping and Baking Yeast Bread

1. Turn dough onto a lightly floured surface; shape into a ball. Fold top of dough toward you. With palms, push with a rolling motion away from you. Turn dough a quarter turn; repeat until smooth and elastic.



2. Place the dough in a bowl greased with butter, oil or cooking spray. Turn dough over to grease the top.



3. Cover with a clean towel or plastic wrap. Place in a warm, draft-free area (80° to 85°) until dough has doubled. (Place covered bowl on top rack in a cold oven with a pan of steaming hot water underneath. Or turn your oven to its lowest setting for no longer than 40 to 50 seconds. Turn off and let dough rise in the oven.)



4. Press two fingers 1/2 in. into the dough. If the dents remain, the dough is doubled in size and is ready to punch down.



5. To punch dough down, make a fist and push it into the center. Gather the dough to the center and shape into a ball. Place on a floured surface.



6. Divide the dough if the recipe directs; shape into balls. Roll each ball into a 12-in. x 8-in. rectangle. You will hear air bubbles popping as you roll the dough.



7. Dust off any flour that might cling to the dough. Beginning at a short end, firmly roll up each rectangle. If it's too loose, you'll see air pockets when the bread is cut. If it's too tight, the bread will crack while baking.



8. Pinch seam and each end to seal. Place seam side down in a greased pan; cover with a towel and allow to double in size in a warm area.



9. When dough has doubled, remove towel; place pans several inches apart in the center of a preheated oven.



10. Test for doneness by removing from pans and tapping the bottom crusts. If it sounds hollow, the bread is done. If the bread is browning too fast and it's not done, tent with foil and continue baking. Unless recipe directs otherwise, immediately remove breads from pans. Cool breads on a wire rack for at least 20 minutes.



Dilled Wheat Bread

My house smells terrific when this wonderful bread is in the oven. It makes a fantastic meal served with soup. Cut thick slices with an electric knife and eat them while they're still warm. Yum!

—BEVERLY PRESTON
FOND DU LAC, WISCONSIN

PREP: 25 MIN. + RISING • **BAKE:** 30 MIN.

YIELD: 1 LOAF (12 SLICES)

- 2 cups all-purpose flour**
- 1 cup whole wheat flour**
- 2 tablespoons sugar**
- 1 tablespoon dried minced onion**
- 1 package (1/4 ounce) active dry yeast**
- 2 teaspoons dill weed**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- 1 cup (8 ounces) cream-style cottage cheese**
- 1/2 cup water**
- 1 tablespoon butter**
- 1 egg**
- 2 teaspoons butter, melted**
- Coarse salt, optional**

- 1.** In a large bowl, combine 3/4 cup all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, sugar, onion, yeast, dill and salt. In a small saucepan, heat the cottage cheese, water and 1 tablespoon butter to 120°-130°. Add to the dry ingredients; beat just until moistened. Add egg; beat until smooth. Stir in enough remaining all-purpose flour to form a soft dough (dough will be sticky).
- 2.** Turn onto a floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 6-8 minutes. Place in a greased bowl, turning once to grease the top. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 1 hour.
- 3.** Punch dough down. Shape into a loaf. Place in a greased 8-in. x 4-in. loaf pan. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 45 minutes.
- 4.** Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until golden brown. Remove to a wire rack. Brush with melted butter; sprinkle with coarse salt if desired.



Proofing Yeast

To make sure active dry yeast (not quick-rise yeast) is alive and active, you may first want to proof it.

- Dissolve one package of yeast and 1 teaspoon sugar in 1/4 cup warm water (110° to 115°). Let stand for 5 to 10 minutes.
- If the mixture foams up, the yeast mixture can be used because the yeast is active. If it does not foam, the yeast should be discarded.

Rapid Mixing Method For Yeast Breads

- 1.** In a bowl, combine flour (about 2 cups), the sugar, active dry or quick-rise yeast, salt and any seasonings.
- 2.** In a saucepan, heat the liquid ingredients (water, milk, honey, molasses and butter or oil) to 120°-130°. Add to flour mixture and beat just until moistened.
- 3.** Add eggs; beat until smooth. Gradually stir in enough of the remaining flour to form a dough of desired consistency. This will vary with the humidity and the dryness of the flour.





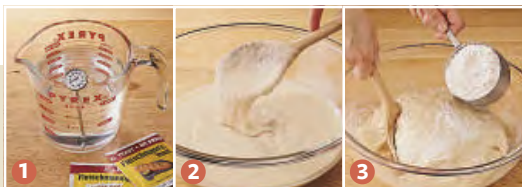
Buttery Herb Loaves

A succulent herb butter is the secret to this bread's irresistible richness. These lovely loaves disappear quickly.

—RHODA COFFEY
OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

PREP: 20 MIN. + RISING • **BAKE:** 20 MIN.
YIELD: 2 LOAVES (16 SLICES EACH)

- 2 packages (¼ ounce each) active dry yeast**
- ¼ cup warm water (110° to 115°)**
- 1 cup warm milk (110° to 115°)**
- 2 eggs**
- ⅓ cup shortening**
- ¼ cup sugar**
- 1 tablespoon salt**
- 4½ to 5 cups all-purpose flour**
- HERB BUTTER:**
- ½ cup butter, softened**
- 1 garlic clove, minced**
- ½ teaspoon dried basil**
- ½ teaspoon dried minced onion**
- ½ teaspoon caraway seeds**
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano**
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper**
- Melted butter**
- Sesame or poppy seeds**



Traditional Mixing Method for Yeast Breads

- 1.** In a saucepan or microwave, heat liquid to 110° to 115°. Use a thermometer to check the temperature. Measure liquid and place in a large bowl. Add active dry yeast; stir until dissolved.
- 2.** Add sugar, salt, fat, eggs (if using) and about half of the flour. Beat with an electric mixer or by hand until smooth.
- 3.** Gradually stir in by hand enough of the remaining flour to form a dough of the consistency stated in the recipe. The amount of flour will vary depending on the humidity and dryness of the flour.

- 1.** In a large bowl, dissolve yeast in warm water. Add the milk, eggs, shortening, sugar, salt and 1 cup flour. Beat on medium speed for 3 minutes or until smooth. Stir in enough remaining flour to form a soft dough.

- 2.** Turn onto a floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 6-8 minutes. Place in a greased bowl, turning once to grease the top. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 1½ hours.

- 3.** Punch dough down. Turn onto a lightly floured surface; divide in half. Roll each portion to ¼-16-in. thickness; cut out ten 5-in. circles from each. Combine the butter, garlic, basil, onion, caraway seeds, oregano and cayenne; spread over dough. Fold circles in half; set half aside.

- 4.** For each loaf, start with one folded circle on a greased baking sheet with folded edge toward the right. Working from right to left, add another piece with folded edge on right side, overlapping three-fourths of the previous piece. Repeat.

- 5.** Form a second rectangular loaf from the reserved folded circles. Brush with butter; sprinkle with sesame seeds. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 30 minutes.

- 6.** Bake at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from pans to wire racks. Serve warm.

Homemade Bread

My husband recalls that on more than one occasion while he was growing up, he stayed home from school sick, napped on the couch and woke to the aroma of his mother's freshly baked bread. That's enough to make anyone feel better!

—DENISE BAUMERT DALHART, TEXAS

PREP: 20 MIN. + RISING • **BAKE:** 20 MIN. + COOLING • **YIELD:** 2 LOAVES (16 SLICES EACH)

- 2 packages (¼ ounce each) active dry yeast**
- 2 cups warm water (105° to 115°)**
- ⅔ cup nonfat dry milk powder**
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted**
- 2 tablespoons sugar**
- 1 tablespoon salt**
- 6 to 7 cups all-purpose flour**

- 1.** In a large bowl, dissolve yeast in warm water. Stir in the milk, butter, sugar, salt and 4 cups flour. Beat until smooth. Stir in enough remaining flour to form a stiff dough.

- 2.** Turn out onto a floured surface and knead until smooth and elastic, about 10 to 12 minutes. Place in a greased bowl, turning once to grease top. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 1 hour.

- 3.** Punch down and divide in half. Shape into two loaves and place in greased 8-in. x 4-in. loaf pans. Cover and let rise until doubled, about 30 min.

- 4.** Bake at 400° for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown, covering with foil during the last 5 minutes to prevent overbrowning if necessary.



Common Yeast Bread Conundrums

Bread did not rise well or did not rise at all

- Yeast was not fresh. Next time, proof the yeast (see page 77).
- The liquid was too hot and killed the yeast.
- Dough was kneaded too much or not enough.
- Oven temperature was too low.

Bread is heavy and coarse

- There's too much liquid or not enough flour in the dough.
- Next time, use a lower-gluten flour, such as whole wheat, rye or oat.
- Dough was allowed to rise too long.
- Oven temperature was too low.

Bread is dry and crumbly

- Too much flour was used.
- Dough was allowed to rise too long.

Bread is doughy on the bottom or has a slightly gummy texture

- Bread was underbaked.
- Bread stayed in the pan too long.

Loaf sinks in the center

- Dough rose too long during the second rise time in the pan.

Bread crumbles when cut

- Oven temperature was too high.
- Too much flour was used.
- Dough was kneaded too much or not enough.

Oven Temperatures for Baking Bread

The oven temperature varies according to the ingredients used.

- Generally, leaner breads (made with flour, water and yeast) are baked at 400° to 425°. Richer breads (made with more fat and eggs) are baked at lower temperatures.
- Breads made with less than ½ cup sugar are generally baked at 375° and breads with more are baked at 350°.
- Bread can bake from 25 to 45 minutes. Baking time depends on the size and shape of the loaf and the temperature of the oven.



Yeast Rolls

The Basics of Yeast Rolls

Yeast rolls use the same techniques as yeast breads. For information on mixing and kneading yeast dough, refer to the Yeast Breads section beginning on page 74. A fun aspect about rolls is that you can create many different looks by the way you shape, bake and finish them. There is a variety of shapes you can create, from simple round roll to cloverleaves, knots and crescents. Place the rolls in a pan with the sides touching and the rolls will have soft sides. Bake them on a baking sheet so air can circulate around each roll and the sides will be crusty. Brush them before baking with an egg white wash and sprinkle with seeds, such as sesame, poppy or caraway, for an interesting appearance or brush rolls warm from the oven with melted butter for a soft top with a shiny appearance.

Secrets for Successful Yeast Rolls

- Use butter or stick margarine with at least 80% oil or shortening. Do not use light or whipped butter, diet spread or tub margarine.
- Measure ingredients accurately, using the measuring techniques and equipment suggested on page 8.
- When mixing dough, always start with a minimum amount of flour until dough reaches the desired consistency (soft, sticky, stiff or firm).
- Knead until dough does not tear easily when stretched. For batter bread dough, stir with a wooden spoon until the batter is stiff.
- Let dough rise in a warm (80° to 85°) draft-free area. Proper rising helps in the development of the bread's texture.
- Use the bread machine to mix, knead and rise dough for rolls. Measure the ingredients, then select the dough setting. When the cycle is completed, remove the dough and shape, rise and bake according to recipe directions.
- Use aluminum pans with a dull rather than shiny or dark finish.
- Position oven rack so that the rolls will be in the center of the oven.
- Preheat the oven for 10-15 minutes before baking.
- To allow for good air circulation while baking, leave at least 1 inch of space between pans and between pans and sides of oven.
- Use a kitchen timer and test for doneness at the minimum amount of time. Rolls are done when they're golden brown.
- Remove rolls from pans. Serve warm or cool on wire racks.

The Yeast of It

Roasted turkey may be the **star** of a holiday feast, but these homemade dinner rolls just might **steal the show**.



MORE ONLINE
Learn to make dough at tasteofhome.com/doughvideo. Find more yeast roll recipes at tasteofhome.com/yeastrolls.

Best Dinner Rolls

These classic dinner rolls make the perfect accompaniment to any meal, big or small.

—CHRISTINA PITTMAN
PARKVILLE, MISSOURI

PREP: 35 MIN. + RISING • **BAKE:** 10 MIN.

YIELD: 2 DOZEN

- 4½ to 5 cups all-purpose flour**
- ¼ cup sugar**
- 1 package (¼ ounces) active dry yeast**
- 1¼ teaspoons salt**
- 1 cup whole milk**
- ½ cup water**
- 2 teaspoons butter**
- 2 eggs**
- 1 egg, lightly beaten**
- Toppings from page 83**

1. In a large bowl, combine 2 cups flour, sugar, yeast and salt. In a small saucepan, heat the milk, water

and butter to 120-130°. Add to dry ingredients; beat on medium speed for 3 minutes. Add 2 eggs; beat on high speed for 2 minutes. Stir in enough of the remaining flour to form a soft dough (dough will be sticky).

- 2.** Turn onto a floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 6-8 minutes. Place in a greased bowl, turning once to grease the top. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 1 hour.
- 3.** Punch dough down. Turn onto a lightly floured surface; divide into 24 portions. Shape into balls. Divide the balls between two greased 13-in. x 9-in. baking pans.
- 4.** Cover with a clean, lightweight towel and let rise until doubled, about 30 minutes. Brush with lightly beaten egg. Sprinkle with toppings of your choice.
- 5.** Bake at 375° for 10-15 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from pans to wire racks.

Toppings

Add some flair to homemade rolls or breadsticks with these quick and easy crowd-pleasing toppers.

Parm-Garlic 2 Tbsp. grated **Parmesan cheese** and ½ tsp. dried minced **garlic**.



Almond-Herb
2 Tbsp. chopped sliced **almonds** and ½ tsp. each **kosher salt**, dried **basil** and dried **oregano**.

Everything 1 tsp. each **poppy seeds**, **kosher salt**, dried minced **garlic**, **sesame seeds** and dried minced **onion**.



Rosette Roll How-To

Make dough as directed on page 82; divide into 24 portions. Shape into balls; roll each into a 10-inch rope. Tie loose knot in the center of rope. Bring bottom end up and tuck into center; wrap top end around and tuck under. Let rise. Bake as directed.

Twist Roll How-To

Make dough as directed on page 82; divide into 24 portions. Shape into balls; roll each into a 10-inch rope. Fold in half and twist two or three times, holding both ends. Pinch rope ends to seal. Let rise. Bake as directed.

Cloverleaf Roll How-To

Make dough as directed on page 82; divide into 24 portions. Divide each portion into three equal pieces; shape into balls. Place three balls in each greased muffin cup. Let rise. Bake as directed.



Quick Breads

The Basics of Quick Breads

The convenience of quick breads comes from the fact that they're leavened with baking powder and/or baking soda, not yeast. You can mix, bake and enjoy these baked goods in less time than traditional yeast breads, which require rising. Like yeast breads, quick breads can be either sweet or savory.

Secrets for Successful Quick Breads

- Measure ingredients accurately, using the measuring tools and techniques suggested on pages 7 and 8.
- Before preheating the oven, arrange the oven racks so that the bread will bake in the center of the oven.
- Preheat the oven for 10-15 minutes before baking.
- Be sure your baking powder and baking soda are fresh. Check the expiration date on the packages before using.
- Mix the liquid and dry ingredients only until moistened. A few lumps in the batter is fine. Overmixing causes the gluten in the flour to develop and the breads to be coarse and tough.
- Use aluminum baking pans and sheets with a dull rather than shiny or dark finish. Fill pans two-thirds full.
- Most quick breads should be baked shortly after dry ingredients and liquid ingredients are combined because the leaveners will begin producing gas once they are moistened. If allowed to stand too long before baking, the bread may have a sunken center.
- To allow for good air circulation while baking, leave at least 1 inch of space between pans and between pans and sides of oven. Switch pan positions and rotate pans halfway through baking.
- Use a kitchen timer. Check for doneness a few minutes before the end of the recommended baking time. The bread is done if a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. If it is not done, test again in a few more minutes. The bread may have a split in the center, which is typical of a quick bread.
- Cool in the pan for 10 minutes, unless recipe directs otherwise. Turn loaves out onto a wire rack to cool. Most quick breads should be cooled completely before slicing to prevent crumbling.
- Quick breads like banana, zucchini and cranberry slice and taste best when they're served a day after baking. Wrap the cooled bread in foil or plastic wrap; leave at room temperature overnight. Others like corn bread are best served warm.
- Using a sawing motion, cut loaves with a thin sharp knife. Use a serrated knife for quick breads that have fruits and/or nuts.
- Most quick breads can be stored at room temperature. Quick breads with cheese should be stored in the refrigerator.

Lemon-Thyme Bread

Lemon and thyme go together like milk and cookies. Fresh thyme is best, but if you use dried, reduce the amount to 1 tablespoon and crush it before adding it to the batter.

—CATHY TANG REDMOND, WASHINGTON

PREP: 25 MIN. • **BAKE:** 40 MIN. + COOLING

- ½ cup butter, softened
 - ¾ cup sugar
 - 1 egg
 - ½ cup buttermilk
 - ½ cup sour cream
 - 1¾ cups all-purpose flour
 - 2 tablespoons minced fresh thyme
 - 1 tablespoon grated lemon peel
 - ½ teaspoon baking soda
 - ¼ teaspoon salt
- Confectioners' sugar**

1. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in egg. Combine buttermilk and sour cream. Combine the flour, thyme, lemon peel, baking soda and salt; add to the creamed mixture alternately with buttermilk mixture, beating well after each addition.

2. Transfer to a greased 8-in. x 4-in. loaf pan. Bake at 350° for 40-50 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pan to a wire rack. Cool completely; sprinkle with confectioners' sugar. *Yield: 1 loaf (12 slices).*
Lemon-Thyme Mini Loaves: Use three greased 5¾-in. x 3-in. x 2-in. loaf pans. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. **For Lemon-Thyme Muffins (or Mini Muffins):** Make batter as directed; fill greased or paper-lined muffin cups (or mini muffin cups) two-thirds full. Bake at 400° for 16-20 minutes (or for mini muffins, bake for 10-12 minutes) or until a toothpick comes out clean. If desired, top with your favorite frosting. *Yield: 1 dozen muffins (or 4 dozen mini muffins).*

Lemon-Thyme Icing: In a small bowl, combine ½ cup confectioners' sugar, ½ teaspoon minced fresh thyme and 3 to 4 teaspoons lemon juice as needed to achieve a drizzling consistency. *Yield: 2 tablespoons icing.*



Quick Studies

Pantry ingredients, lickety-split mixing and 45 minutes of heavenly smells wafting through the kitchen make quick bread a must for the holidays.

Sizable Gifts

This luscious bread lends itself to sharing. Make it effortlessly giftable by baking several loaves in inexpensive, paper-lined wooden pans. Once the loaves cool, slip them into plastic gift bags and simply tie with colorful ribbon, string or yarn.



Quick Bread Conundrums

Bread is tough and dense or has tunnels

• Batter was overmixed.

Bread is soggy

• Batter had too much liquid or fat.

Center of bread has sunk

• There was too little or too much leavening.

• Bread was underbaked.

• Batter stood too long before baking.

Bread has a thick brown crust

• Batter had too much sugar.

Bread has a bitter aftertaste

• Batter had too much leavener.

Bread crumbles while being cut

• Bread was still warm. Cool completely before slicing.

Nuts, fruit or chocolate chips sink to bottom of bread

• Batter was too thin to hold the fruit, nuts or chips. Next time, chop them smaller or try using miniature chocolate chips.

Checking Quick Breads for Doneness

Insert a toothpick near the center of the bread. If the toothpick comes out clean—without any crumbs—the bread is done.



Storing Quick Breads

- Quick breads may be wrapped in foil or plastic wrap and stored at room temperature for up to 3 days. If made with cheese, cream cheese or other perishable ingredients, they should be refrigerated.
- For longer storage, place quick breads in resealable plastic freezer bags and freeze for up to 3 months.

Chocolate Zucchini Bread

I stir grated zucchini into this no-fuss loaf. I fix it whenever my family wants something chocolaty. Try it in your bread machine if it has a quick bread setting.

—ADRIENE LUJBLI GILBOA, NEW YORK

PREP: 15 MIN. • **BAKE:** 1 HOUR + COOLING
YIELD: 1 LOAF (12 SLICES)

- ½ cup butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 3 tablespoons baking cocoa
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 cup grated unpeeled zucchini
- ½ cup semisweet chocolate chips

1. In a large bowl, cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs and vanilla.

2. Combine the flour, cocoa, salt, baking soda and cinnamon; gradually add to creamed mixture just until moistened. Fold in zucchini and chocolate chips.

3. Spoon into a greased 8-in. x 4-in. loaf pan. Bake at 350° for 60-70 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pan to a wire rack.

The Basics of Muffins, Scones & Biscuits

No wonder these hand-held goodies are favored by both beginning and seasoned bakers alike—the tiny treats require very little mixing...little or no kneading and shaping...and they bake in minutes. In fact, muffins, scones and biscuits are often considered quick breads. So whether you're baking a sweet goodie to nibble on or you're preparing savory biscuits to serve at dinner, the heavenly aroma wafting from the oven promises to beckon everyone in your home to come running to the kitchen.

Secrets for Successful Muffins

- Measure ingredients accurately, using the measuring tools and techniques suggested on pages 7 and 8.
- Use butter, stick margarine (with at least 80% oil) or shortening. For best results, do not use whipped, tub, soft, liquid or reduced-fat products. The fat should be softened (at room temperature), meaning it is pliable when touched.
- Before preheating the oven, arrange the oven racks so that the pans will bake in the center of the oven.
- Preheat the oven for 10-15 minutes before baking.
- Standard muffin pans come in different sizes, which affect baking time. The muffin pans we used in this book measure 2½ inches across.
- Most muffin batters can be baked in jumbo, standard or mini muffin pans. Just be sure to adjust the baking time in the recipe (more time for jumbo and standard muffins, less time for mini muffins). A larger muffin pan will yield fewer muffins than a smaller muffin cup.
- Fill muffin cups from two-thirds to three-fourths full, wiping off any spills. If your muffin recipe does not fill all the cups in your pan, fill the empty cups with water. The muffins will bake more evenly.
- Unless the recipe directs otherwise, muffins should go directly into the oven as soon as the batter is mixed.
- Use a kitchen timer. Check for doneness 5-7 minutes before the end of the recommended baking time to avoid overbaking the items.
- Muffins are done when a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. For muffins with a filling, make sure the toothpick is inserted into the muffin and not the filling.
- Cool in the pan for 5 minutes, unless the recipe directs otherwise. Muffins are best served warm, fresh from the oven.

Muffins, Scones & Biscuits

Making Muffins

1. In a large bowl, combine flour, leaveners, salt and spices (if using) with a fork.



2. Beat the eggs and combine with the liquid ingredients.



3. Make a well in the flour mixture and pour egg mixture into the well all at one time.



4. With a spoon or spatula, stir the ingredients together just until moistened. Fill greased or paper-lined muffin cups about two-thirds to three-fourths full, wiping off any spills.



5. Bake until golden or test for doneness by inserting a toothpick into the center of the muffin. If the toothpick comes out clean, the muffins are done. Cool for 5 minutes before removing from pan to a wire rack.



Peanut Butter Mini Muffins

These bite-size muffins are perfect to send in kids' lunches or to enjoy as an after-school snack. I make regular-size muffins for church functions and watch the sweets disappear in no time.

—CONNIE BARZ SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

PREP/TOTAL TIME: 25 MIN. • **YIELD:** 4 DOZEN

- 1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour**
- 3/5 cup packed brown sugar**
- 2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder**
- 1/4 teaspoon salt**
- 1 egg**
- 3/4 cup 2% milk**
- 2/3 cup chunky peanut butter**
- 1/4 cup canola oil**
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- 2/3 cup miniature semisweet chocolate chips**

- 1.** In a large bowl, combine the flour, brown sugar, baking powder and salt. In another bowl, combine the egg, milk, peanut butter, oil and vanilla. Stir into flour mixture just until moistened. Fold in chocolate chips.
 - 2.** Fill greased or paper-lined miniature muffin cups two-thirds full. Bake at 350° for 15-17 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 5 minutes; remove from pans to wire racks. Serve warm.
- Editor's Note:** *Reduced-fat or generic brands of peanut butter are not recommended for this recipe. Twelve regular-size muffin cups may be used; bake for 22-25 minutes.*

Basil Marmalade Scones

Orange marmalade and fragrant basil give these delightful scones a slightly sweet, garden-fresh flavor. They're tender and moist and perfect with morning or afternoon tea.

—HANNAH WALLACE
WENATCHEE, WASHINGTON

PREP: 20 MIN. • **BAKE:** 15 MIN.

YIELD: 8 SCONES

- 2 cups all-purpose flour**
- 3 tablespoons sugar**
- 2 teaspoons baking powder**
- 1/2 teaspoon salt**
- 3 tablespoons cold butter**
- 3 tablespoons minced fresh basil or 1 tablespoon dried basil**
- 2 eggs**
- 1/3 cup fat-free milk**
- 1/3 cup orange marmalade**

- 1.** In a small bowl, combine the flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Stir in basil. Whisk eggs and milk; stir into crumb mixture just until moistened. Turn onto a floured surface; knead 5 times.
- 2.** Divide dough in half. Transfer one portion to a baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Pat into a 7-in. circle. Spread marmalade to within 1/2 in. of edge. Pat remaining dough into a 7-in. circle. Place over marmalade; seal edges. Cut into eight wedges, but do not separate.
- 3.** Bake at 400° for 15-20 minutes or until golden brown. Serve warm.



Secrets for Successful Biscuits & Scones

- Use cold butter, cold stick margarine (with at least 80% oil) or shortening. Cut in butter or shortening only until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs.
- Stir flour, leaveners, salt and spices (if using) together with a fork to evenly distribute the baking powder or baking soda.
- For a more tender biscuit or scone, be careful not to overmix or overknead the dough.
- When reworking biscuit trimmings, handle the dough as little as possible and use as little additional flour as needed. Overworking the dough or using too much flour will result in a tough, dry product.
- Dip the biscuit cutter in flour after each cut to prevent sticking.
- Scones are generally patted into a circle and cut into wedges. If the wedges are separated, the scones will have a crisper crust. If the wedges are cut and not separated, the scones will have a softer crust.
- Biscuits and scones are done when they're golden brown on the top and bottom. The sides will always be a little light. Remove to wire racks. Biscuits are best served warm, fresh from the oven. Scones are best on the day they are made.

Muffins, Biscuits & Scones Baking Conundrums

- Muffins, biscuits or scones are tough**
- Batter/dough was overmixed or overhandled. Next time, mix just until combined.
- Muffins have tunnels and/or peaks**
- Batter was overmixed.
- Muffins have a bitter aftertaste**
- Too much leavener was used.
- Biscuits baked unevenly**
- Batter was not patted or rolled out evenly. Next time, use a ruler to measure thickness.

Making & Shaping Biscuits

1. Combine the flour, leaveners, salt and spices (if using) with a fork. With a pastry blender or two knives, cut butter or shortening into flour mixture until it resembles coarse crumbs.



2. Make a well in the center of the crumb mixture. Pour in the liquid all at once and mix with a fork just until dry ingredients are moistened and the mixture begins to cling together.



3. Turn onto a lightly floured surface and knead gently as many times as recipe directs.



4. Roll dough evenly to 1/2-in. to 3/4-in. thickness. Cut with a floured biscuit cutter, using a straight downward motion; do not twist cutter.



5. Place biscuits on a baking sheet. Place 1 to 1 1/2 in. apart for biscuits with crusty sides or almost touching for softer-sided biscuits.



6. Gently gather trimmings into a ball. Do not knead. Roll and cut as in Step 4.



Storing Muffins, Scones & Biscuits

- Store muffins, biscuits and scones in an airtight container at room temperature. (If made with cheese, cream cheese or other perishable foods, they should be stored in the refrigerator.)
- Muffins stay fresh for up to 3 days. Biscuits and scones should be eaten within 1 to 2 days.
- You can freeze muffins for up to 1 month and biscuits and scones for up to 3 months.

Making the Cut

The term “cut in” refers to distributing cold butter, margarine or shortening into a flour mixture, using either a pastry blender or two chilled knives. Pastry blenders (like the one at right) are available at most kitchen supply stores.



If you don't have a pastry blender, cut in cold butter for biscuits by hand. First, cube or cut the butter into smaller pieces. It is “cut in” when the flour mixture resembles coarse crumbs.



Expert Advice

- Stir dry ingredients together to evenly distribute the baking powder and/or baking soda before cutting in the butter.
- The secret to flaky biscuits is to keep the butter cold. Pieces of cold butter create steam pockets as they melt, lofting the dough layers and helping to keep them tender.
- For tender biscuits, take care not to overmix or overknead the dough. Heat from your hands will melt the butter before baking.
- For cutout biscuits, use a lightly floured biscuit cutter. Make a straight downward motion—avoid twisting the cutter. Dip it in flour after each use to prevent sticking.
- To make biscuits in a hurry without reusing dough scraps, roll the dough into a larger rectangle and cut the smaller rectangular biscuits with a sharp knife.
- Biscuits are done when they're golden brown on the top and bottom. The sides will always be a little light. Biscuits are best served warm.
- In general, keep your biscuits fresh by storing them in an airtight container at room temperature. However, if they contain any perishable ingredients, such as cheese, they should be stored in the refrigerator. Biscuits will be at their best if eaten within 1 to 2 days. Can't eat them that quickly? Put them in the freezer—they'll keep for up to 3 months.



Iced Raisin Biscuits

You can whip up a warm, mouthwatering breakfast treat in a snap! Sweet raisins and maple syrup bring out the best in this seasonally inspired spice blend.

—TASTE OF HOME TEST KITCHEN

PREP: 20 MIN. • **BAKE:** 15 MIN.
YIELD: 10 BISCUITS

DOUGH:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/2 cup cold butter, cubed
- 1/3 cup raisins
- 1/2 cup 2% milk
- 3 tablespoons maple syrup

ICING:

- 1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1/8 teaspoon rum extract
- 2/4 teaspoons 2% milk

1. In a large bowl, combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, cinnamon, salt and nutmeg. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add raisins. In a small bowl, combine milk and syrup; stir into crumb mixture just until moistened.
2. Turn onto a lightly floured surface; knead 8-10 times. Pat or roll out to 1/2-in. thickness; cut with a floured 2 1/2-in. biscuit cutter. Place 1 in. apart on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake at 450° for 12-15 minutes or until golden brown.
3. Meanwhile, combine the confectioners' sugar, extract and enough of the milk to achieve desired consistency. Drizzle over warm biscuits.

The Basics of Coffee Cakes & Sweet Rolls

Rich, delicate, filled with cream or dusted with sugar, there's simply nothing as delectable as the blissful, old-fashioned comfort of made-at-home bakery pleasures. Generally, coffee cakes and sweet rolls are just as fabulous served for dessert or eaten as a snack as they are for breakfast or brunch. They can be made from a yeast dough or quick bread batter but are usually sweeter than plain breads or rolls. The from-scratch goodness of these traditional favorites will leave hungry tummies more than satisfied.

Secrets for Successful Coffee Cakes & Sweet Rolls

- Measure ingredients accurately, using the measuring tools and techniques suggested on pages 7 and 8.
- Arrange the oven racks so that the breads or rolls will be baked in the center of the oven.
- Preheat oven for 10 to 15 minutes before baking.
- Quick bread coffee cakes (those that use baking powder and/or baking soda) should be baked shortly after the dry and liquid ingredients are combined, because the leaveners start to react once they are moistened. If allowed to stand too long before baking, the bread may have a sunken center.
- When making yeast bread coffee cakes and sweet rolls, always start with the minimum amount of flour, stirring in more flour until the dough reaches the desired consistency (soft, sticky, stiff or firm). Knead the dough only until it does not tear easily when stretched. Let the dough rise in a warm (80° to 85°) draft-free area.
- Use aluminum pans with a dull rather than a shiny or dark finish. Glass baking dishes and dark finishes will produce darker crusts.
- To allow for good air circulation while baking, leave at least 1 in. of space between pans and between pans and sides of oven.
- Use a kitchen timer and test for doneness at the minimum recommended baking time. Yeast breads are done when they are golden brown and sound hollow when tapped on the bottom, or when an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the loaf reads 200°. Quick breads are done when a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean.
- Cool breads according to recipe directions.
- Use a serrated knife and sawing motion when cutting breads.

Coffee Cakes & Sweet Rolls



Festive Fruit Ladder

Festive is the perfect word to describe this fabulous bread. I am going to try it next with apricots and cinnamon, or some of my home-canned plums!

—CATHRINE EMERSON
ARLINGTON, WASHINGTON

PREP: 45 MIN. + RISING • **BAKE:** 25 MIN. + COOLING • **YIELD:** 1 LOAF (24 SLICES)

DOUGH:

- 1 package (¼ ounce) active dry yeast
- 1 cup warm fat-free milk (110° to 115°)
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons butter, softened
- 1 egg
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 3½ to 4 cups all-purpose flour

FILLING:

- ½ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- ¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅔ cup apple cider or unsweetened apple juice
- 4 cups thinly sliced peeled tart apples
- ⅔ cup dried cranberries
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon water

ICING:

- 1 cup confectioners' sugar
- 4 teaspoons water
- ½ teaspoon almond extract
- ¼ cup dried cranberries
- 2 tablespoons sliced almonds, toasted

1. In a large bowl, dissolve yeast in warm milk. Add the sugar, butter, egg, salt and 3 cups flour. Beat on medium speed for 2 minutes. Stir in enough remaining flour to form a soft dough.
2. Turn onto a lightly floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 6-8 minutes. Place in a large bowl coated with cooking spray, turning once to coat the top. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 45 minutes.
3. In a saucepan, combine the sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon and cider. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 1 minute or until thickened. Stir in apples; cook 5-10 minutes longer or until crisp-tender. Remove from the heat; stir in cranberries. Cool to room temperature.
4. Punch dough down; roll into a 15-in. x 12-in. rectangle. Place on a baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Spread filling lengthwise down center of dough. On each long side, cut 1-in.-wide strips ½ in. from the filling. Fold alternating strips at an angle across the filling; seal ends. Cover; let rise until doubled.
5. Beat the egg and water; brush over dough. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from pan to a wire rack to cool.
6. Combine the confectioners' sugar, water and extract; drizzle over loaf. Sprinkle with cranberries and almonds.

Braiding a Filled Bread

1. Roll out dough into a rectangle; place on a greased baking sheet. Spread the filling down the center of rectangle. On each long side, cut 1-in.-wide strips, about ½ in. from the filling.
2. Starting at one end, fold alternating strips at an angle across filling. Seal ends.



Easy Molasses Sticky Buns

Your family will jump out of bed when they smell these ooey-goey caramel rolls baking in the oven. The tender treats look as delicious as they taste!

—NANCY FOUST
STONEBORO, PENNSYLVANIA

PREP: 20 MIN. + RISING • **BAKE:** 25 MIN. **YIELD:** 1 DOZEN

- 2 loaves (16 ounces each) frozen bread dough, thawed
 - ⅓ cup butter, softened
 - ½ cup sugar
 - 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- MOLASSES SAUCE:**
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
 - ½ cup butter, cubed
 - ½ cup water
 - ¼ cup molasses

1. Roll out each loaf of bread dough into a 10-in. square. Spread with butter to within ½ in. of edges. Combine sugar and cinnamon; sprinkle over butter. Roll up jelly-roll style; pinch seams to seal. Cut each loaf into six slices.
2. For sauce, in a small saucepan, bring the brown sugar, butter, water and molasses to a boil. Pour into a greased 13-in. x 9-in. baking dish. Place rolls, cut side down, in molasses sauce.
3. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 30 minutes. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until golden brown. Cool in dish for 5 minutes; invert onto a serving platter. Serve warm.

Shaping Cinnamon Rolls & Sticky Buns

1. Roll dough into a rectangle. Spread or brush with butter; sprinkle with filling. Roll up, starting from a long end, and pinch seam to seal.
2. Slice into rolls. Place cut side down in a greased baking pan.
3. Cover and let rise until doubled. Rolls will begin to touch each other.
4. After baking, combine glaze ingredients if desired; spoon in a thin stream over warm rolls.



Cherry Cream Cheese Coffee Cake

You'll like the texture of this coffee cake. The sour cream pairs well with the cherries, and the almonds make a nice accent. With a sweet streusel topping, it's hard to eat only one slice.

—LINDA GUILLES BELVIDERE, NEW JERSEY

PREP: 25 MIN. • **BAKE:** 50 MIN. + COOLING

YIELD: 1 COFFEE CAKE (8-10 SERVINGS)

DOUGH:

- 2¼ cups all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup sugar
- ¾ cup cold butter, cubed
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- ¾ cup sour cream
- 1 teaspoon almond extract

FILLING:

- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1 can (21 ounces) cherry pie filling
- ½ cup slivered almonds

1. In a large bowl, combine flour and sugar. Cut in butter until crumbly. Reserve ¾ cup crumb mixture. Add baking powder, baking soda and salt to remaining crumb mixture. Stir in egg, sour cream and almond extract until blended. Press onto the bottom and 1 in. up the sides of an ungreased 9-in. springform pan with removable bottom.
2. For filling, in a bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar for 1 minute. Add egg; beat just until combined. Spread over crust. Carefully top with the pie filling. Top with the almonds and reserved crumb mixture.
3. Bake at 350° for 50-60 minutes or until center is set. Cool on a wire rack. Carefully run a knife around edge of pan to loosen; remove sides of pan. Store in the refrigerator.



Coffee Cake Tips

- An oven-fresh coffee cake is a real delight. But it's not always possible to make it first thing in the morning. To recapture the flavor, warm individual pieces in the microwave at 50% power, checking at 20- to 30-second intervals. Let it stand before indulging, as the icing may be hot. To reheat in the oven, wrap an unfrosted coffee cake in foil. Reheat at 350° for a few minutes or until warm.
- Many coffee cakes can be converted into muffins. Simply spoon batter into muffin pans. If there is a streusel topping, sprinkle it over each muffin. Bake at the same temperature as called for in the recipe for about one-fourth of the time or until a toothpick comes out clean.

Storing Coffee Cakes & Sweet Rolls

- Cool coffee cakes and sweet rolls completely. Place in an airtight container or plastic bag; keep at room temperature for 2 to 3 days. Breads containing perishable items should be refrigerated.
- For longer storage, unfrosted sweet breads can be frozen for up to 3 months. Thaw at room temperature, then frost or glaze as desired.

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