

# TOP 5: Tips for Successful Gluten-Free Baking

What does it take to produce a loaf of bread that rises and doesn't sink or cookies that spread properly? How annoying is it to spend time and money following a recipe only to pull a baking fail out of the oven? Being a graduate of The Culinary Institute of America with a degree in pastry and baking arts, Elizabeth has seen her fair share of flops, as have I, which prompted us to compile our top five tips for successful baking.

## 1. SWAP SOLID FAT FOR SOLID FAT

There is a difference between solid and liquid fats and how they work in recipes. If a recipe calls for butter, replace it with another solid fat such as shortening, lard or coconut oil. In cookie and cake recipes, solid fats work with the sugar to lighten the recipe. Those same recipes made with a liquid fat could turn out heavy and greasy.

## 2. DON'T SKIP THE SALT

When making a yeast bread, don't omit the salt. It might seem like a small amount, but that salt plays the key role of controlling yeast growth to prevent it from collapsing. Plus, it adds flavor. A loaf made without salt can sink and end up flavorless. Unless kosher or another type of salt is specifically called for in a recipe, use table salt. Its fine texture makes it the best choice for baking.

## 3. WEIGHT VERSUS VOLUME

To measure ingredients, you have two choices: weight or volume. For weight, use a kitchen scale. For volume measurements, use two sets of measuring cups—one for liquid ingredients and one for dry. Pour the ingredient into the cup and get down to eye-level to ensure it's accurate. For dry ingredients like flour, oats and sugar, use a set of nested measuring cups. Scoop the dry ingredients into the cup, overfilling a little. Then swipe a straight-edged tool such as a butter knife across the top to level it out.

## 4. CHECK DATES

Ingredients don't last forever. Baking soda, baking powder and yeast all have expiration dates. Be sure to check them before using in a recipe to ensure cakes, cookies and breads will rise. Check spices, too, because they lose flavor over time. To test a spice, put a little between two fingers and rub it together. If it has a nice aroma, you're set. If you can't smell anything, toss it.

## 5. GET THE GRIT OUT

Grittiness is one of the most common complaints about gluten-free baked goods. When shopping for ingredients, look for superfine rice flour or whole-grain flours, like sorghum or millet, which tend to be fine and grit free. Experiment with different brands, because some are gritty and some aren't.

—Jennifer Harris and Elizabeth Barbone

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