

Tips to Moist & Tender Baked Goods

Measure flour properly. Ideally, you should weigh flour using a digital scale but if you don't have one, use the spoon and level method: spoon the flour into a dry measuring cup and level the top with a straight edge. This is important because a cup of flour measured in volume can vary by several ounces. If you scoop flour into a measuring cup and pack it in, you'll end up with too much flour and your baked goods will be dry. (The only ingredient that you should ever pack into a cup is brown sugar.)

Use room temperature ingredients. When a recipe calls for room temperature ingredients, it's important to comply. Cold butter cannot be creamed and cold eggs can curdle a batter.

- To speed up the process you can cut sticks of butter into fourths lengthwise and then cube into small pieces. The smaller the cubes, the quicker the butter will soften. Just leave them at room temperature for about an hour or until soft to the touch.
- You can leave eggs on the counter about two hours at room temperature or one hour if the temperature is 90 degrees or hotter before you start to worry, per the Egg Safety Center. Eggs or egg dishes sitting at room temperature beyond these limits should be discarded.

Check your oven temp. It's a good idea to check your oven temperature every so often to be sure it's accurate. Along the same lines, when you're baking, try not to open your oven to peek until the recommended bake time is up. Otherwise, you'll let cool air in, which interrupts the baking process. (If you use a convection oven, always reduce the oven temperature by 25°.)

Don't make substitutions. There are no good substitutes for all-purpose flour, sugar, butter, or eggs.

Use a light hand. You've seen the phrase, "Do not overmix." Important because once you add flour to a recipe, mixing encourages gluten development which creates a chewy or tough texture. When a recipe says, "do not overmix," stir only until the batter is uniform.