

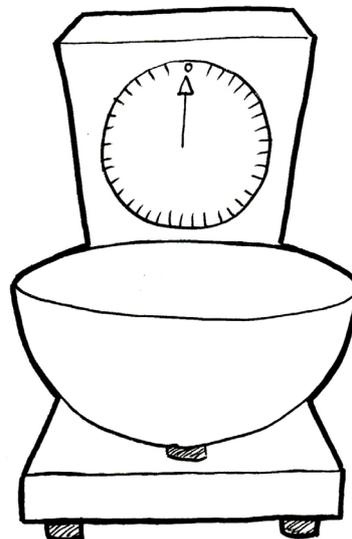
BEAUTIFUL BAKING



ACCURACY IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Baking is a lot of fun, and the results can be really special. Things like cakes, cupcakes, muffins and puddings are all examples of delicious baked foods. But unlike a lot of cooking, where you can freestyle a bit and make it up as you go, baking can be quite temperamental. To get the best results, try to follow the instructions, measurements and timings in recipes as precisely as you can, and make sure you use the correct ingredients.

Jamie says, *"I was never brilliant at maths, but desserts are kind of like an equation – if you combine the right things in the right proportions you will get the same answer every time. So, when you're following a recipe for a cake, pastry or biscuits, you have to follow it strictly – otherwise what you end up taking out of the oven will probably not be quite what you wanted to make!"*



WHAT ARE SPONGES AND CAKES MADE OF?



Sponges and cakes are usually made from a basic mixture of fat, sugar, eggs and flour. Often the flour has a raising agent added to it to create bubbles in the cake as it cooks, making it spongy and light. Baking powder is the most commonly used raising agent, and if a recipe doesn't use self-raising flour, you'll probably need to add baking powder to your plain flour to make your cake rise.

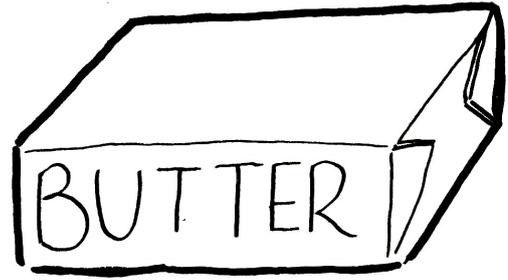


If the sponge you are making is quite simple, you can play around with the flavours in your topping or filling. You can make all sorts of delicious icings and use sliced fruit, shavings of chocolate or even edible flower petals to create a real showstopper of a dessert.

HOW CAN I ENSURE I GET THE BEST RESULTS?

Measuring the ingredients exactly is the key to success, so, accurate scales are a very important piece of equipment. You can buy see-saw scales with weights that you balance, spring balance scales with a clock face, or electronic scales with a digital display. Make sure the scales are set to zero before you start.

Always start with clean equipment. A bowl that was clean when you put it away last time might have gathered dust since then, and this could affect the way your recipe turns out. For example, meringues are very temperamental and if the equipment used to make them isn't sparkling clean, they may not turn out well. So check your bowls, whisks and other equipment before you start cooking, and wash anything you aren't sure about.



There's no point having clean equipment if your work surface and hands are dirty. So clear away any clutter before you start, then give the surface and your hands a good scrub.

Having the correct oven temperature is crucial when baking. All ovens are different, that's just a fact of life. It's a good idea to buy a small oven thermometer from a cook's shop and put it in your oven while you bake. That way, you can turn the oven up or down to get the temperature you need (see *Temperature conversion chart*).

Resist the temptation to open the oven door because every time you do, the heat will rush out and cool the oven down. If your oven is old, it might take 5 minutes or more for it to come back up to the right temperature. Look through the window instead and only open the door if you absolutely need to.