

5 easy ways to Bake Quick Breads Well Every Time

Why are “quick breads” quick? They use baking powder or baking soda to rise. This means it takes much less time to make these breads than it does to make breads with yeast. The other reason these breads are so popular is their great taste. The key to tender breads and muffins is to keep the gluten in the flour from “developing” too much. Follow these five tips when you make breads from batters.

1. Preheat oven and “grease” pan thoroughly.

First, move the racks around so that the pans have room to sit in the middle of the oven. Then, preheat the oven for 10 to 15 minutes. Bread and muffins need uniform high heat to rise quickly and cook thoroughly. Quick bread batter is sticky. So cover pan surfaces with cooking spray, oil or shortening. Paper muffin liners and non-stick pans also work great.

2. Mix dry and wet ingredients separately.

Measure dry ingredients carefully into a large bowl. These may include flours, cereal, sugar, salt, spices and leavening agents. Leavening agents are things like baking soda, baking powder or cream of tartar. Stir or whisk together until well mixed. Then measure the wet ingredients into a medium bowl. These could be milk, eggs, oil, melted butter, fresh fruit, dried fruit, applesauce, etc. Your recipe should tell you how to mix the wet ingredients.

3. Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients gently.

This is the most critical step. The more you mix the wet and dry ingredients together, the more you develop the flour’s gluten. If you mix it too much, your bread will become tough and coarse. It probably will not rise correctly. So do not beat the batter. Stir the batter gently, just enough to moisten the dry ingredients. There may be a few lumps remaining, which is just fine.

4. Fill baking pans properly.

Fill bread pans and muffin tins about $\frac{2}{3}$ full. If you plan to freeze your muffins, use two paper liners per space. Fill any empty (unlined) muffin cups half way with water. Muffins tend to burn faster in a pan with empty cups. Get bread or muffin pans into the oven as soon as possible. The longer that the batter sits around, the more the gluten develops.



5. Bake quick breads carefully.

Leave at least one inch of space between pans and oven sides. This allows room for air to circulate in the oven. Check for doneness 10 to 15 minutes before the end of the recommended baking time. The bread is done if a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. A crack in the loaf is normal. Cool in the pan for 10 minutes; then turn the bread onto a wire rack.