

5 easy ways to

Enjoy Successful Baking Projects

Imagine baking whole-grain breads, rolls or muffins. Maybe you would make cakes, cookies and bars. Whatever you bake, it will fill your kitchen with wonderful smells and your tummy with tasty foods. Family baking projects teach kids cooking skills. And they create lifetime food memories. Here are five tips to make every baking project a winner.

1. Follow directions exactly.

You can be creative while cooking, but follow baking recipes exactly. To be a successful baker, you need to have the right ingredients. They need to be combined in the right order. Then they need to bake at the right temperature. Change any of these things, and you may end up with tough bread, a fallen cake or runny cookies.

2. Heat the oven correctly.

Most recipes say to pre-heat the oven. This means getting the oven to the right temperature before you put the item in. It takes about 10 minutes to pre-heat, so turn the oven on first thing. It will heat up while you measure and mix ingredients. Some bakers use an oven thermometer. They cost about \$6. If you use one, you can be sure the oven is the right temperature. This is especially important for older ovens.

3. Measure accurately.

You should measure all ingredients with care. Measuring wrong is worse for some ingredients than others. Some ingredients help baked goods to rise. These are called leavening agents. Examples are baking powder, baking soda and yeast. It is very important to measure leavening agents correctly. If you bake with yeast, be careful with sugar and salt. These help control the growth of yeast, so you need to have the right amount.



4. Add and mix carefully.

The way you add and mix ingredients matters. It makes a difference to the texture of your baked good. Here are three common terms and their meanings. **Beat** means to stir quickly and completely. The reason you beat is to add air to the mixture. **Blend** means to stir together until just combined. The mixture may be lumpy. **Mix** means to stir until the ingredients are thoroughly combined. The texture should be uniform after mixing.

5. Substitute sensibly.

When you make a salad, it is easy to substitute. You can use one vegetable in place of another. It is harder to replace ingredients when you bake. Every ingredient has a role in a baked good. If you do not have an ingredient, you must use something that will play the same role. For a long list of substitutions, go to <http://lancaster.unl.edu/food/ciqsubs.shtml>. You will also find other cooking tips here.