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Pantry Basics

Essential Ingredients for Beginner Bakers



Did you ever get the urge to bake up some warm and gooey cookies with melty chocolate chips and found you were missing... well chocolate chips! What a bummer!

Maybe you just married the guy of your dreams. You really want to make something special each week. Just to show him what a gem he got and because you want to shower him with sweet nothings. But where do you begin?

Use this list to build your pantry and fridge with basics baking items and ingredients. Then you will be prepared to easily and quickly bake your favorite breads, muffins, pancakes and fancy desserts.



Basic Baking Ingredients



Baking can be such an enjoyable experience both in the making of a favorite treat, in serving it to family and friends and of course enjoying a delicious bread, cake, pie or cookie.

Keeping ingredients on hand makes it easy to reduce time and inconvenience so you can get to the fun part... baking!



Beginner Bakers

If you are just starting out, don't fear you will have to purchase tons of items. Begin with the basic ingredients and build from there as your interest and baking experiences grow. Many items last for a relatively long period of time when stored correctly and don't need replenishing frequently.

Look over the following list and check your cabinets for what you already have and make a shopping list for the items you will want to have for most of your baking needs



Flour

- **Basic all-purpose**

Flour is used for making cakes, cookies, muffins, waffles and pancakes. All-purpose flour is what you will use most often. It helps give baked goods body, structure, texture and flavor. In baking, it binds the ingredients together and supports the batter. Often flour is used to thicken sauces, creams and pie fillings. It is used for dusting cake pans to help prevent batters and bread dough from sticking to surfaces. All-purpose flour can be bleached or unbleached which are interchangeable.

Storage: Store flour in airtight, moisture proof containers on a cool dark shelf or in the fridge.

- **Specialty flours:** As you move to the next level of baking you will find recipes calling for different flours. Flour contains protein and when it comes in contact with water and heat it produces gluten, which gives elasticity and strength to baked goods. Different types of flour contain different amounts of protein.

- **Whole-wheat flour:** Whole-wheat flour still contains the outer kernel of the wheat. You can substitute up to half of the all-purpose flour with whole-wheat in recipes.

Storage: Since whole-wheat flour contains fat from the wheat germ, it can become rancid quickly. It will keep fresh for about six months in the freezer or a couple of months at room temperature.

- **Bread flour:** Bread flour is super-high in gluten and used for yeast breads to produce good structure and chewiness.

Storage: Store in the pantry for up to eight months.

- **Cake flour:** Cake flour has the lowest protein (gluten) of all types of flour. It is good for making cakes, biscuits and scones where a tender and delicate texture is desired

Storage: Keep it in the pantry for up to eight months.

- **Self-rising flour:** Self-rising flour contains flour plus baking powder and salt. You can make your own simply by adding 1 1/2-teaspoons of baking powder and 1/4-teaspoon of salt per cup (130 grams) of all-purpose flour.

Storage: Keep tightly wrapped and store no more than six months.

Leaveners

Leaveners are what cause chemical reactions that make baked goods rise by filling batters and dough with the tiny gas bubbles. Both baking powder and baking soda are chemical leavening agents that cause batters to rise when baked.

When dissolved in liquid and combined with an acid ingredient, a chemical reaction occurs that produces carbon dioxide to leaven baked goods. Because this reaction happens immediately, it is important to bake your recipes shortly after the batter has been mixed.

- **Baking soda:** Baking soda, also known as sodium bicarbonate or bicarbonate of soda, is used as a chemical leavener to make dough and batter rise.

Storage: Baking soda can last quite a while when stored in a cool, dry place. Use by expiration date on the container or test to see if it is still active by mixing some with vinegar. It will bubble up if it is still active.

- **Baking powder:** Baking Powder is composed of baking soda, an acid (usually cream of tartar) and a moisture absorber, like cornstarch. Baking powder used today is double-acting. That means it reacts to liquid and heat in two stages. The first reaction takes place when you add the baking powder to the batter and it is moistened. One of the acid salts reacts with the baking soda and produces carbon dioxide gas. The second reaction takes place when the batter is placed in the oven. The gas cells expand causing the batter to rise. Because of the two stages, baking of the batter can be delayed for about 15-20 minutes without it losing its leavening power.

Storage: Check the date on the bottom of the container before purchasing to make sure it hasn't expired; once you open it, it will be effective for about six months

- **Yeast:** Yeast is a living organism. Baker's yeast, like baking powder and baking soda, is used to leavened baked.

Storage: Store active dry yeast or instant yeast in the pantry for months or until expiration date on package. It has a long shelf life and can last for year stored in your refrigerator.

Sugar

- **Granulated:** Granulated sugar is what most recipes call for. It is plain white sugar, refined from sugar cane or beets.

Storage: Stored in a tightly covered canister and it will last for years.

- **Confectioner sugar:** Confectioner sugar is also called powdered sugar or 10 X sugar. It is granulated sugar that has been ground into a powder with cornstarch. Confectioners' sugar is commonly used in cake and cookie icings and is often dusted on desserts.

Storage: Store in a tightly covered container or original box for up to 2 years.

- **Brown sugar:** Brown sugar is a soft-textured, refined white sugar flavored with molasses creating a color that varies from light to dark brown. It has a full-bodied flavor and soft moist texture.

Storage: Brown sugar has the tendency to lump and become hard. Keep it very well wrapped in the original packaging or in an airtight container. If the sugar hardens, leave a slice of apple or a piece of bread in the container for a few hours or overnight.

Liquid Sweeteners

- **Molasses:** Molasses is a dark, viscous syrup. It is the liquid that is left behind from refining sugar. Light molasses is from the first boiling of the sugar syrup; dark is from the second; and blackstrap, the strongest, is from the third.

Storage: Molasses can be stored in the pantry.

- **Honey:** Honey is a natural sweetener and has a very long shelf life.

Storage: When properly stored, honey can last forever!

Salt

- Regular table salt or Kosher salt. I prefer kosher salt.

Storage: Store salt tightly sealed, away from dampness, and it will last forever.

Dairy

- **Butter:** Unsalted butter is best as you will know just the amount salt you will want in the recipe.

Storage: Butter will remain fresh 1-month in the refrigerator and 6-9 months in the freezer.

- **Eggs:** Large eggs are typically the size that is used in baking unless otherwise instructed.

Storage: 4 to 5 weeks beyond the pack date or about 3 weeks after purchase.

- **Milk:** Milk gives moisture to batters. Keep a quart of milk in the fridge for pancakes and waffles. Whole milk gives a richer flavor than low-fat milk but you can substitute to cut fat and calories.

Storage: Milk will generally remain drinkable for about one week after the "sell-by" date on the package, assuming it has been continuously refrigerated; be sure to keep the temperature of your refrigerator at or below 40° F at all times.

- **Buttermilk:** Buttermilk makes pancakes and biscuits fluffier and more tender. It is also used in some creamy dressings. Since you probably won't use it often, you can easily make a substitute by adding 1 tablespoon of fresh-squeezed lemon juice or vinegar to a glass measuring cup and pouring in milk to the 1-cup level. Stir and wait 5 minutes for the mixture to thicken and use in place of buttermilk.

Storage: Buttermilk lasts for 1-2 weeks beyond the date printed on the carton, and it can usually even be used beyond that point for cooking and baking needs.

Oil and Shortening

- **Vegetable oil:**

Storage: About 1-year

- **Shortening:** Shortening is a solid vegetable fat. It can be used to either to replace butter or in combination with butter to make tender baked goods like pie crusts. Shortening has a higher melting point than butter, so cookies made with shortening tend to keep their shape better.

Storage: About 1-year

Extracts

- **Pure vanilla extract:** You will get the best flavor when using pure vanilla extract and it is a flavoring you will use often. Pure vanilla, with its wonderful aromatic flavor, is the most widely used flavoring in pastries, confections, and other desserts.

Storage: Replace the lid right after using and keep the bottle in a cool, dark place away from heat, moisture and sunlight and vanilla should last indefinitely.

- Other Extracts like almond, lemon and mint add nice flavoring and are great to have but you probably won't use them often.

Storage: Store in a cool, dark place away from heat, moisture and sunlight and these extracts will last about 4 years.

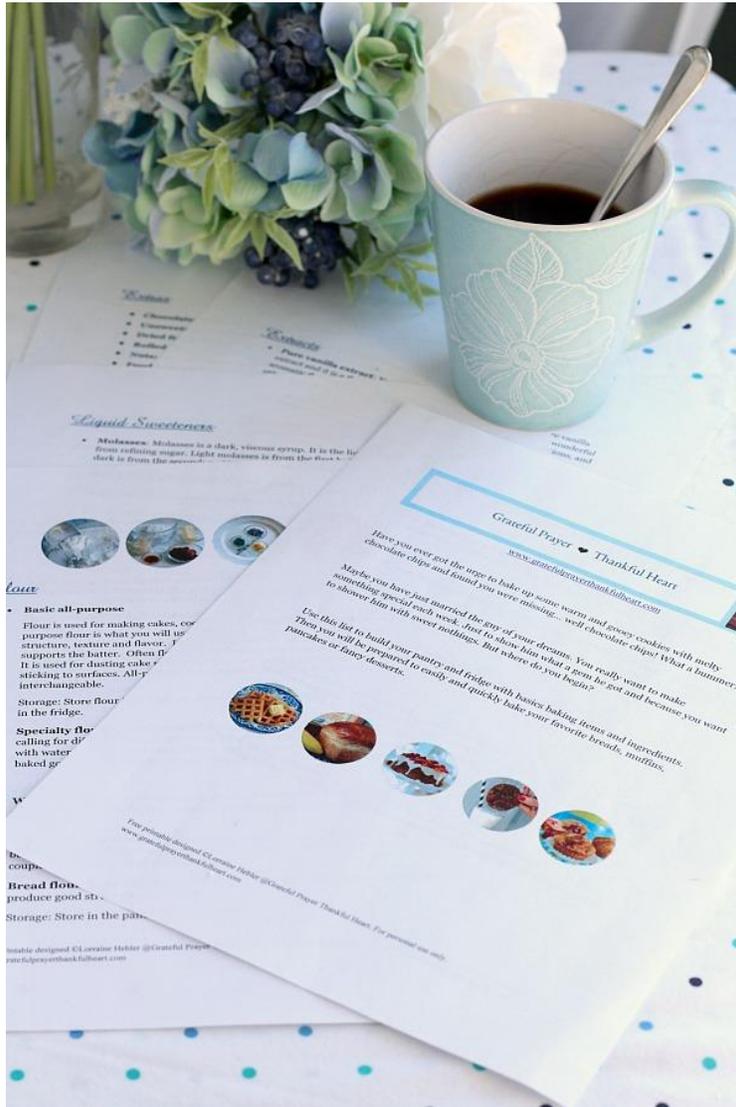
Spices

- **Ground cinnamon:** Cinnamon is a warm, aromatic spice that is a reddish-brown color and a bittersweet flavor.
- **Ground cloves:** Cloves are a sweet, rich spice and a staple in holiday baking, especially gingersnaps. Use it sparingly; a little goes a long way.
- **Ground ginger:** Ground ginger adds sweet heat.
- **Nutmeg:** Nutmeg is a delicate, warm spice frequently used in baking. Buy it whole and grate it for the best flavor.

Storage: Whole spices and dried herbs, leaves and flowers will keep 1 - 2 years. Seeds will keep 2 - 3 years and whole roots (i.e. ginger root) will keep 3 years. Ground spices and herb leaves keep 1 year.

Extras

- **Chocolate:** Stock some chocolate in the form of bar and chocolate chips.
- **Unsweetened cocoa powder**
- **Dried fruits:** Such as raisins and cranberries.
- **Rolled oats:** not instant.
- **Nuts:** Such as walnuts, pecans.
- **Food coloring:** Liquid or gel.
- **Sprinkles:** For cakes, cupcakes or ice-cream topping.



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