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Pauline Peacock
Iowa State College

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Successful Cake Baking
By PAULINE PEACOCK

The housewife who can serve to her guests and her family cakes that are rich and dainty is the envy of her less fortunate friends, and perhaps you will hear her near friend exclaim, "You always do have such good luck with your cake." Luck may enter into your art of cake baking once in a while, and once in a while you may make a clever guess as to materials, but such guess work spells failure more times than it spells success. Numerous recipes are not necessary in this art, but by having a reliable pattern recipe, you may change that into many fancy and various flavored cakes. The plain pattern recipe given below is a good dependable recipe used in the Foods Department of Iowa State College and one easily altered.

Fat 1/4 C, Sugar 1 1/4 C, Salt 1/4 tsp., Liquid, milk or water 1 C. Eggs 2, Baking Powder 1 tsp., Flavoring 1 tsp., Flour 3 C.

Cream fat in a deep, large bowl until the consistency of thick, smooth cream. Add twice sifted and measured sugar, and salt gradually, and beat until light and fine grained. Beat vigorously between the additions of liquid and flour which has been sifted and measured. Sift in baking powder stirring well. Fold in gradually the stiffly beaten egg whites and flavoring.

Besides depending upon certain fundamental rules and a certain knowledge of quality successful cake baking depends upon the application of heat. For instance eggs and their manipulation are one of the main stumbling blocks. Eggs contain albumen, which begins to coagulate at about 144 degrees, while flour has to be subjected to a much greater heat in order to cook the starch. This tells the eggs out the fact that cakes must rise to their full extent before they start to brown over the top because the eggs act as a leavening agent.

The appearance while baking is a good guide toward regulating the heat. The time for baking a cake may be divided into four periods: (1) Cake begins to rise, does not brown at all. (2) Continues to rise and toward end of period becomes a very light brown. (3) Continues to brown and toward last of period gets as brown as desired. (4) Shrinks from sides of pan which is a good test for the finished product.

There are many important points to remember in regard to the use and adding of the flour. It is well to be posted on the differences between spring wheat flour, winter wheat flour and pastry flour. Winter wheat flour and pastry flour are preferable for cake baking. If bread flour is used, one fifth less should be added as bread flour requires more moisture than pastry flour. One may substitute for one third of the flour an equal amount of rice flour or cornstarch.

Cake baking in higher altitudes presents a problem. We must remember that all cake recipes are adjusted for low altitudes and that this will vary the proportion of flour used. For example, a recipe for one hundred feet altitude would when being baked in higher altitudes require about one fifth more flour. Cakes baked in shallow pans or

layer cakes pans also require about one fifth more flour than cakes baked in the loaf pans. In changing the proportion of flour, one must remember to vary the amount of baking powder used in relation to the amount of flour.

Originally cakes were made without any leavening. We have remnants today of that type in our fruit and pound cakes. But the methods involved in cake baking of today have changed with our other methods of sixty years ago. We have decided that bread and cake require a leavening agent so that the digestive process may not be taxed by the use of heavy cakes and breads.

The use of soda should be restricted to the amount necessary to neutralize the acids of the milk or molasses present. Too little carbon dioxide would thus be generated as a leavening for the flour in such mixtures. It is best to supply the carbon dioxide by the additional use of baking powder. This should be carried out in proportion of half a level teaspoon of soda to each cup of flour when soda is used with the acids. A recent experiment has shown that by adding the soda to the flour, the gases generated by the action of the soda on the acids will take place in the baking rather than before the cake has under gone any change due to heat. Quite often the occasion arises when one desires to substitute sour milk when the original recipe called for sweet milk. In making the alterations one would use the same amount of liquid and to each cup of sour milk substitute one half teaspoon soda and one half the amount of baking powder called for.

Cakes may be divided into two classes; those without butter and those with butter. Angel Food and sunshine cakes would be examples of the first and cup cakes and pound cakes would be put in the second division. There are several methods known for mixing the cake batters. The method recommended by the Foods Department for the mixing of the richer cakes is called the Conventional cake method and is probably the most common.

Conventional cake method.

Cream fat until the consistency of thick, smooth cream. Add the sifted and measured sugar and salt gradually, and continue beating until the sugar is very fine grained and the mixture is light.

Combine the well beaten yolks with the first mixture.

Add alternately the liquid and the flour which has been sifted three times. Beat.

Sift in the baking powder, stirring it well.

Fold in carefully the well beaten egg whites and the flavoring.

The second method is similar to the first except that the unseparated eggs are beaten and added to the sugar and butter mixture. The common muffin method is classed as one of the ways of mixing a cake. In this process the liquids are mixed and then added to the flour mixture. The cake mixer is very seldom used in the home. However, in using the cake mixer one should cream the fat and add the other ingredients excepting the baking powder. The mixture should be turned and then the baking powder and the flavoring added. The cake method is similar again to the cake mixer method only a large bowl and spoon are used and this is called the bowl method.

Hints

Make cake by a reliable recipe and follow it closely.

Sift the flour before using.

Use level measurements.

Oven should be just right for the particular recipe.

Always test the oven. In using solids, do not measure tightly but pack well.

To make whites of eggs beat quickly, add a small pinch of salt.

One secret of good cakes is the fine