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An extract from

The Very Best Baking Book for Children

Written by

Fiona Patchett & Abigail Wheatley

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Baking basics

Greasing & lining tins & trays

For greasing, dip a paper towel into softened butter or cooking oil. Rub it over the inside of the tin or tray.



To line a tin or tray, put it on some baking parchment. Draw around it. Cut out the shape. Put it in the tin or on the tray.

Beating butter & sugar

1 Put the sugar and butter in a big bowl. Stir them together with a wooden spoon.

2 Beat very quickly with the spoon, until the mixture is pale and fluffy.



3 If it's hard to beat, pour hot water into a fresh bowl. Pour it out, dry the bowl, then transfer the mixture to it and try again.

Sifting

1 Put the ingredients in a sieve. Hold it over a bowl. Tap the sieve, so the ingredients fall through.



2 If there are lumps left in the sieve, squash them through with the back of a spoon.







Breaking eggs

Crack the egg sharply on the edge of a cup or bowl. Pull the shell apart, so the white and yolk slide into the cup or bowl. Pick out any bits of shell.





Beating eggs

Beat the yolk and white with a fork, to mix them together well.

Mixing gently, or 'folding'

1 Use a spatula or a big metal spoon. Move it gently through the mixture, making the shape of a number 8.



2 Stop as soon as everything is mixed together.

Separating eggs

1 Break the egg (see above), but let the white and yolk slide onto a small plate.

2 Cover the yolk with an egg cup. Hold the egg cup. Hold the plate over a bowl. Tip, so the white slides in.



Beating egg whites

1 Beat the egg white very quickly with a whisk, until it becomes very thick and foamy.

2 Lift up the whisk. If the foam stays in a floppy point, you have whisked enough. Keep on whisking until it does.



Chocolate whoopie pies

Ingredients:

75g (3oz) butter
1 large egg
150g (5oz) caster sugar
150ml (¼ pint) soured cream
2 teaspoons vanilla essence
3 tablespoons milk
225g (8oz) plain flour
50g (2oz) cocoa powder
¾ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
some ice cream, for filling

You will also need 2 baking trays.

Makes around 15

This recipe is for chocolate whoopie pies filled with ice cream. If you prefer, you could fill your pies with vanilla buttercream by following the recipe on the previous page – or you could try the other fillings mentioned on the opposite page.

1 Heat the oven to 180°C, 350°F or gas mark 4. Put the baking trays on some baking parchment. Draw around them. Cut out the shapes and put them on the trays.



2 Put the butter in a small pan. Heat gently until the butter just melts. Take the pan off the heat.



3 Break the egg into a large bowl. Add the sugar. Whisk for 2-3 minutes, until the mixture is thick and pale.



4 Add the melted butter, sour cream, vanilla and milk. Mix them in gently using a big metal spoon, moving it in the shape of an 8.



5 Sift the flour, cocoa and bicarbonate of soda over the mixture. Mix them in gently, still moving the spoon in the shape of a number 8.



6 Put teaspoonfuls of the mixture on the trays, making sure the blobs are well spaced out. Bake for 10-12 minutes, or until just firm.



7 Leave on the trays for 5 minutes. Then, put them on 2 wire racks to cool. Don't fill the pies until they are completely cold



8 To fill a pie, spread some ice cream on the flat side of a sponge. Press another sponge on top. Wrap the pie in plastic food wrap and put it in the freezer. Do the same with the others.



9 Leave the pies in the freezer for 1 hour, or longer if you prefer. When you want to eat one, put it in the fridge for 10 minutes, to soften a little.

Other fillings

For chocolate buttercream, you will need 50g (2oz) softened butter or margarine, 75g (3oz) icing sugar, 25g (1oz) cocoa powder, 1 teaspoon vanilla essence and 1 teaspoon milk or water. To make it, follow the instructions on page 376.

For white chocolate ganache, you will need 200g (7oz) white chocolate and 100ml (3½floz) double cream. To make it, follow the instructions for ganache on page 381.

Home-made bread

There's nothing like home-made bread, fresh from the oven. It's not difficult to make: you just need to leave some time for the dough to rise. This recipe shows you how to make one loaf or 12 rolls.

Ingredients:

450g (1lb) strong white bread flour
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons easy-blend dried yeast
2 tablespoons olive oil
a little milk, for brushing (optional)

You will also need a baking tray.

Makes 1 loaf or 12 rolls



1 Sift the flour and salt into a big bowl. Stir in the yeast. Measure 300ml (½ pint) warm water into a jug. Add the oil. Pour into the bowl.



2 Stir until it comes together. Put the dough on a surface dusted with flour and knead it for 10 minutes (see page 374), or until it is smooth and springy.



3 If you're in a hurry, skip to step 5. If you're not, put the dough in a bowl, cover with a tea towel and leave in a warm place to rise.



4 Leave for around 1½-2 hours, or until the dough has doubled in size. Put it on a floury surface. Knead it gently, to squash out any air bubbles.



5 Shape it into one big ball or 12 small balls. Grease the baking tray. Put the dough on it. Cover with a tea towel. Leave in a warm place.



6 Wait until the dough doubles in size. This may take 40 minutes to 2 hours. Then, heat the oven to 220°C, 425°F or gas mark 7.





You could decorate the top of your bread with seeds (see below), rolled oats or flour.



7 Brush with milk. If you're making one loaf, bake for 30 minutes. For rolls, bake for 12-15 minutes.



8 The bread is cooked when the crust is brown and it sounds hollow when you tap the bottom. When it's cooked, put it on a wire rack to cool.

Wholemeal bread

This recipe also works if you use strong wholemeal bread flour, or a mixture of half white and half wholemeal bread flour.

Seeded bread

For seeded bread, stir 50g (2oz) poppy seeds, sesame seeds or sunflower seeds into the flour at step 1. Sprinkle an extra tablespoon of seeds over the bread at step 5. Seeds may not be suitable for those with nut allergies.

Other bread ideas

Homemade bread tastes delicious eaten warm, spread with a little butter, jam or lemon curd. You could make your own lemon curd, following the recipe on pages 252-253. If your bread gets a little stale, you could eat it as toast.