

## PREPARING BAKED FOODS EXHIBITS FOR THE FAIR



- ◆ Read the Fair Book. It has a lot of basic information about classes, requirements, rules, etc. For answers to other questions, contact your project leader or call the Extension Office.
- ◆ Select several recipes to try. Make the recipe several times so you know how the product turns out. Like all new skills, practice is necessary to learn and to improve and get consistent results. You will then know if you (or your family) like it and if it is something that you can use to build your skills in food preparation.
- ◆ Choose your foods exhibit entry based on what you want to learn as part of the 4-H project. Do not choose an item for the judge or for what you think the judge will like. Judges are chosen for the ability to be fair and objective and not to use personal likes and dislikes in judging. Food products are judged according to standards for texture, shape, crumb, crust, etc.
- ◆ Use time management skills in planning your foods exhibits. Bake items ahead of time and freeze them. After baking bread, rolls, cookies, etc., remove them from pans and cool to room temperature. Place in plastic bags or wrap with freezer wrap paper. Remove excessive air. To thaw, leave in original wrapper at room temperature. This will help preserve the moisture in the products. Allow time for food to completely thaw. Small items like cookies, biscuits, muffins, etc., take less than 1 hour. Large and heavier items like cakes and bread can take up to 3 hours. Do not freeze frosted items (the frosting will crack) or cupcakes baked in paper liners (these will turn loose in the freezer).
- ◆ It is always a good idea to bring a copy of the recipe along, even if the rules don't ask for it. That way if any questions come up, you can refer to your recipe.
- ◆ In conference judging, the judge will visit with you about your project. This is not a test. You should answer the best you can by yourself! Here are some things to know:
  - ▶ Name, age, level or phase, number of years in food project
  - ▶ Know the types of ingredients you used:
    - Flour - cake flour, all purpose, bread flour, whole wheat, self rising, etc.
    - Type of fat - vegetable shortening, lard, butter, margarine, oil, etc.
    - Flavoring - vanilla, almond, lemon, etc.
    - Sugar type - brown, white/granular, powdered/confectioners, etc.
    - Nuts - pecans, peanuts, walnuts, etc.
  - ▶ Be able to describe how you mixed and prepared the recipe.
  - ▶ Know basic terms like: cream, sift, powder, beat, rise, etc.
  - ▶ Basic nutrition of the product: calories, fat, sodium, food group
  - ▶ What new skills did you learn in making this product
  - ▶ Cost of ingredients for one recipe (batch)
  - ▶ How would you change it in the future? For example: bake it longer, use a different size pan, change the flavorings, reduce the fat or sugar, etc.
  - ▶ What did you like best about making this product? What was the most difficult part?

- ◆ You may want to choose to improve the nutritional content of your recipe by adjusting fat and sugar. Generally, you can reduce the fat and/or sugar by 25% in most recipes. Other recipe modifications include: using egg substitute or egg whites only, replacing ½ the oil with applesauce, use buttermilk instead of whole milk, or substituting ¼ to ½ the flour with whole wheat flour.
- ◆ Exhibitors are responsible for the presentation of the food items. This is the showmanship part of the foods project.
- ◆ Never use old Styrofoam meat or poultry trays for displaying food products. These trays could contain salmonella bacteria which could lead to food poisoning.

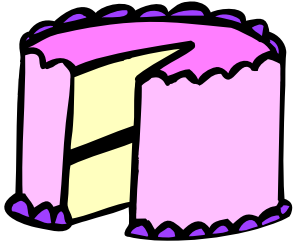
## HINTS AND HELPS FOR BAKED PRODUCTS

### COOKIES

There are 5 basic types of cooked – rolled, dropped, refrigerator, pressed and bar cookies.



- ◆ Rolled cookies are made from a stiff dough that is rolled out to a desired thickness and cut into various shapes.
  - ◆ Dropped cookies are made from a soft dough that is dropped from a spoon or dipper onto a cookie sheet.
  - ◆ Refrigerator cookies are made from a rich dough which has been shaped into a roll, thoroughly chilled, and then is sliced and baked.
  - ◆ Pressed cookies are made from a rich, stiff dough extruded through a decorative tube.
  - ◆ Bar cookies are baked in a shallow pan and cut into bars when cool.
1. Make sure the cookies are all the same size. To test for this, put 2 cookies together, matching the flat, bottom sides. Look to see if one is larger than the other. Keep comparing until you come up with cookies that are as close as possible to the same size.
  2. Check to make sure that they are the same “brownness”. You don’t want one that is almost burnt and one that is not done. Different cookie sheets bake differently. The darker the baking sheet, the darker the cookie will be. Bright, shiny pans reflect the heat more evenly. The cookies you choose to exhibit should be as alike as possible. Uniformity is important in food products.
  3. Bar cookies or brownies are cut into serving size pieces. Use a rule to make sure you get them the same size. 2" x 2" or 2" x 3" is an average serving size. Make sure that the edges all look the same. Don’t take some from the middle and some from the edge because then some will have crust and some won’t. Take them all from the center or all from a side edge.
  4. For even drop cookies, use a small ice cream dipper to dip cookie dough onto cookies sheets. This makes them the same size and it’s easy to do. Speciality food stores sell them for about \$6-\$7.
  5. Cookies spread if they are too close together on the cookie sheet; dough is too soft; dough is placed on a hot baking sheet. Cookies made with butter or margarine tend to spread more.



## CAKES

1. For layer cakes, line the bottom of the pan with waxed paper. To do this, place pan on top of waxed paper and with a paring knife, trace around the outside edge. This will leave a marking line. Cut along the line with scissors. Place the cut out in the bottom of the pan. Neither the paper nor the pan have to be greased or floured. After baking, cool cake slightly, turn it out on a cloth, and peel the paper off the bottom of the cake.
2. Freeze layer cakes individually before frosting. When ready to frost, take out and frost while still frozen. This makes less crumbs in the frosting and the cakes are easier to handle.
3. For an even raising cake, pour batter into prepared pans. Gently tap the pan on the counter top 2 or 3 times. This will take care of any large air holes and also even out the batter. Be careful – if you do this too hard your cake will not rise!!!
4. For entry at the fair, put cakes on a piece of foil covered cardboard. Try using a round pizza cardboard insert for round cakes. Cut the cardboard down to size to fit your cake. The cardboard should be no more than 1" larger than your cake. Excess cardboard makes it difficult to fit in to the plastic bag and it takes up extra space. Cardboard is preferred over a paper plate, because a paper plate does not give enough support to hold the cake firmly.
5. Put the cake in a food grade, plastic bag. Do not cover with plastic wrap as this makes it too difficult to unwrap and re-wrap for the food sale. Do not use garbage bags as these are not food safe. You can sometimes find 2 gallon "Baggies" which are a nice size for large products. Or use the large, turkey cooking bags. The presentation of your product is part of your responsibility as an exhibitor.
6. To keep a plastic bag from sticking to the cake, cut a drinking straw into fourths. Place straws around the top of the cake. Put in plastic bag and then blow air into the bag. Close with twist tie.
7. Know which side is right! Foam and chiffon cakes are exhibited with top crust showing...like it is baked in the pan. When putting together layer cakes, the "bottoms go together" so that you have a level middle and a rounded top.
8. Cupcakes are baked and exhibited in the paper liners. Choose cupcakes that are the same height – not too pointy like mountains and not too flat. To make it easy to fill cupcakes, use an ice cream scoop or measuring cup. Try to get the right amount in the first time. If you go back and add more batter later, it can cause uneven rising.
9. A common problem with cupcakes is "peaks" that look like mountains. This can be caused by filling the pan too full; over mixing the batter; or oven temperature too high. Another problem is when the batter was dropped from a spoon held too high up from the pan. This causes the dough to "splat" and knock out all the cells of air.
10. When frosting a 2 layer cake, leave a spot the size of a quarter unfrosted in the middle of your first layer. Put the second layer on top. The cake will stick to itself in the center and be less likely to slide off the cake and run down the sides.
11. Use a hydrogenated vegetable shortening (like Crisco) not butter or margarine for frosting for the fair. Shortening has a higher melting point and won't run in the summer heat!

Here is a basic "hot, fair weather" frosting recipe:

½ c. shortening	1 lb. (4 c.) confectioner's sugar
1 t. vanilla or other flavoring	3 T. milk

Blend the shortening and sugar together. Add the vanilla and flavoring. Stir until smooth. Makes about 2½ c. frosting or enough for 2 - 9" layer cakes. (Note: for chocolate frosting, add about 1/3 c. cocoa powder and a little more milk.)

12. Whipped topping frosting, cooked filled frostings (like German Chocolate Cake frostings), cream cheese frosting, and cooked custard fillings are not acceptable when refrigeration is not provided.

### FOAM CAKES

These cakes characteristically contain a large proportion of eggs or egg white and they are leavened by steam and air. They are baked in an ungreased tube pan.

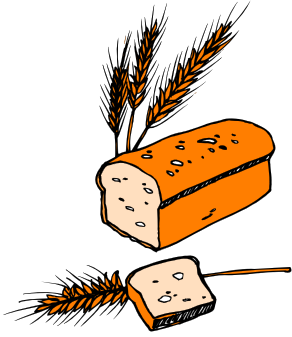
1. Sticky crusts are caused by too much sugar or not baked long enough.
2. A tough crust is a sign of over mixing or baking at too low of a temperature.
3. A dry cake may be caused by: over beating egg whites; too much flour, and baking too long.
4. A heavy cake usually means that the eggs are not beaten enough or the air was lost during the mixing process (over mixed).
5. If the cake is shrunken it may mean that the temperature was too low; not enough cream of tartar and not baked long enough.

### QUICK BREADS

Food items in this category are breads that do not use yeast. This includes loaf bread like strawberry bread, banana bread, coffee cakes, etc. This category also includes biscuits and muffins.



1. If you have a thick ridge around a loaf of quick, this is called a “fry line”. It means that you have greased the pan too much. Cut back on the amount; try doing the bottom only; try a non-stick vegetable spray.
2. If the outside of the loaf has a gray color and a solid, slick feel to the crust, you probably used too much flour when you greased and floured your pan.
3. Quick breads have a tendency to crack down the center. This is because they are a heavy, dense batter. Generally the richer the nut bread (one with more sugar and fat) the less the crack. The less sugar and fat in the recipe, the larger the crack.
4. If the quick bread is rising too much in the center, pour the batter in the pan and then make a slight “trough” down the center, gently pushing the dough towards the corners and outside edges.
5. If the quick bread is browning too much on top, loosely shield the top with aluminum foil. To test for doneness, insert a toothpick in the center. If it is “gooey” when you remove it, continue baking. If it comes out clean or with crumbs, it’s done.
6. Loaves of quick breads should be displayed on a rectangular shaped, foil covered cardboard.
7. Plain muffins are usually baked without the paper liners. Dessert/sweet/fruit muffins are usually baked with paper liners.
8. If using walnuts, pecans, etc., taste one before putting them in the batter. Nuts can become rancid and they give a really bad flavor to your bread.
9. For banana bread, use really ripe, black, squishy bananas. They will give more flavor and a moister product. If you are a little short of bananas, use applesauce to make up the difference.
10. To keep nuts, raisins, and dried fruits from “sinking” to the bottom of the pan, coat them lightly with a little bit of flour. The flour will “stick” to the batter and they will stay more evenly distributed in the batter.
11. Big holes or tunnels inside quick breads indicate too much mixing.



## YEAST BREADS

1. For exhibit purposes, it is not recommended to butter to top of a loaf or bread or rolls. Butter can give a rancid off flavor, especially if it is not really fresh. Adding butter to the top of the crust also adds a greasy texture to the crust. So it's OK to do this at home for your family, but not for competition.
2. Choose yeast rolls that are the same height, size and shape. Check the bottom for even brownness. When selecting pan rolls or cinnamon rolls, use those all from the edges or all from the center, so that they look alike.
3. A bulged and cracked crust could mean that: the dough is too stiff (too much flour); uneven heat during baking; or insufficiently proofed.
4. A crust that is too thick is generally caused by an oven that bakes too slowly.
5. A streaked crust or loaf means that too much flour was added during the shaping process. Hint: If the dough is a little bit sticky, lightly spray the counter and/or your hands with a non-stick cooking spray.

For additional information on these and other food products, consult these resources:  
4-H Foods and Nutrition Curriculum Notebook  
Judge's Guide for Baked Foods, KSU, June 1984 (4-H 488)

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