

BAKING BOOTCAMP

VOLUME 1

by

fresh april flours



Baking tips and tricks
that will help you
become a **better baker!**

If you follow me on Instagram or are a regular reader of my blog, you probably saw the 10 days of baking tips during the week before Christmas 2014. I had no idea that you all would love them so much! Because you may not have caught all of them or just want to be able to reference them sometime down the road, this e-book has `em all!

I called this book "Baking Bootcamp Volume 1" because I plan to share more helpful tips with you all in the future. I **want** you to become a better baker, I **want** you to challenge yourself in the kitchen... Knowing helpful tips and essential skills can most certainly help you do that.

These tips are pretty basic and general, but if there is ever a topic or skill you would like some specific tips about, please let me know. A lot of these things are second nature to me, and I forget that not everyone has a baking brain like mine.

COOKIE SCOOPS



If you don't have one, GET ONE. This one is considered a "medium" and holds about 1.5 Tablespoons of cookie dough. I always use it to measure my dough before rolling into a ball. It also holds the PERFECT amount of batter for mini-cupcakes. Using a cookie scoop ensures even baking and uniform results!

ICE CREAM SCOOP



A SCANT ice cream scoop full (scant = just a little less) of cupcake batter is the perfect amount for a standard cupcake liner. And the trigger makes for clean and easy dispensing of batter!

DRY vs LIQUID MEASURING CUPS



Is there a difference between dry and liquid measuring cups? Why yes, there is! Dry are meant to be filled and leveled off, and liquid are meant to be poured into, read at eye level, and dispensed. If you missed my post on measuring properly, catch it in its entirety on my blog (under Tutorials)!

UNSALTED vs SALTED BUTTER



Always always always UNSALTED butter. Why?

Because not only can you control the salt content in your recipe, you have NO idea how much salt will be in any given stick of butter, especially because salt content can vary from brand to brand. To be safe... Always unsalted!

FLOUR SHAKER



This baking tip should come in handy if you are making roll-out cookies or a yeast bread. A flour shaker with a handle and a fine screen is your best friend when you need a lightly floured surface. Even distribution is key!

RESPECT THE COMMA



When it comes to ingredients in a recipe, “1/2 cup chopped walnuts” is not the same as “1/2 cup walnuts, chopped.” The first requires chopping then measuring. The second requires measuring and THEN chopping. The same goes for “1 cup sifted flour” and “1 cup flour, sifted.” RESPECT THE COMMA (in non-recipe related grammar too, but that’s a whole different soapbox)!

WOODEN DOWELS



When rolling dough for cut out cookies (like gingerbread men), use wooden dowels to ensure your cookies are all the same thickness.

Two 1/4" dowels set on either side of your dough allow your rolling pin to keep everything even.

OVEN THERMOMETER



Is your oven accurate? An oven thermometer will help you determine that. Here, our oven is set to 350°F, telling me it's ready, but it's only registering about 290°F. I almost always wait another 10 minutes before I pop something in there! Baking temperature is critical when it comes to the success or failure of a recipe. And temps can vary from rack to rack. BUY ONE.

This was only \$6 at the grocery store!

CREAMING BUTTER AND SUGAR



Creaming butter and sugar is not a step that people who write recipes (me!) say just for fun. Incorporating sugar into your butter like this allows the sugar to be uniformly dispersed throughout your batter. Not only that, but the process incorporates air to your batter which brings lift/rise and fluffiness to your baked goods. Butter and sugar are fully creamed when the mixture is about double in size and pale yellow. My mixer does this in about 3 minutes, but it can take up to 5 or 6 with larger quantities or a less powerful mixer!

READING YOUR RECIPE



This baking tip is more a public service announcement... Please, please, please... **READ YOUR RECIPE BEFORE YOU BEGIN BAKING!** This ensures you know what you need, when you need it, how you need it, and if there's anything that might trip you up. I cannot stress this enough. Do yourself a favor and set yourself up for as much success as possible!

I hope that this compilation has given you a little more confidence and basic understanding of baking fundamentals.

Did you learn something?

Is there something that surprised you?

What are you excited about doing differently first?

Is there a baking question you've always wanted to know the answer to?

Ask away! Your great question might make it into Baking Bootcamp Volume 2.

HAPPY BAKING!