

Baking Glossary

It can be challenging to understand a recipe when they're using terminology you aren't familiar with. That's why we've compiled this baking glossary you can reference any time you don't know what a recipe is talking about. This A-Z list includes many common baking terms. If your recipe has any terms that aren't listed here, don't hesitate to contact us! We're always here to help.

A

Absorption

How flour retains moisture, usually determined by measuring out the amount of liquid needed in order to make the dough the desired consistency, typically expressed in percentages.

Accelerated Soaking

A soaking technique used on grains, seeds, beans, and other ingredients with a very low phytase level in order to lower phytic acid while keeping the food's pH level stable.

Acidic

Acid ingredients have sour tastes and react with bases in order to form water and salts. They have a pH of less than 7.

Active Dry Yeast

The type of yeast used to leaven bread, mostly used by home bakers. It is available as both quick and regular rising.

Aerate, Aeration

To whip or sift or beat air between particles, such as with confectioners sugar, flour, or butter and sugar.

Agave

(pronounced: ah-GAH-vay)

A liquid sweetener made from the core of the agave plant. It has a low glycemic index.

All-Purpose Flour

A wheat flour milled from either hard wheat or a mix of hard and soft wheat with a medium protein content (10-12%). It can be used for almost any type of baking.

Altitude

Adjustments may need to be made in baking at certain altitudes. For instance, baking temperature may need to be increased slightly, boiling may take longer, and flour may be dryer, among many other factors.

Ancient Grains

An umbrella term for grains and pseudocereals that have been minimally changed over recent millennia, as opposed to other grains that have been altered by selective breeding, such as corn and rice.

Artificial Sweeteners

Sugar substitutes that are non-nutritive, such as stevia.

Artisan

A skilled baker who uses partly hand-made methods to produce baked goods.

Ascorbic Acid

This is the scientific name for Vitamin C, which is used for gluten development.

Autolyse

Combining water and flour in bread baking prior to adding other ingredients and kneading.

B

Bain-marie

The French term for a water bath. Usually used to melt chocolate and butter gradually and gently over simmering water.

Bake

Cooking via dry heat in an oven. When used for meats, this is referred to as roasting.

Baker's Dozen

This refers to 13, rather than 12. It's believed to have originated as a way for bakers to avoid customers accusing them of short-charging.

Baker's Percentage/Baker's Math

When baking formulas are based primarily on flour, the weight of each ingredient is measured by a percentage of the total weight of the flour.

Baking Mix

A combination of pre-measured dry baking ingredients, such as sugar, flour, etc.

Baking Pan

A pan used for baking, available in a wide variety of shapes and sizes.

Baking Powder

A rising agent that produces carbon dioxide in the presence of heat and moisture, which allows for baked goods to rise.

Baking Sheet

A flat, rectangular pan used for baking flat foods, such as cookies.

Baking Soda

A raising agent in baking. When it reacts with an acidic compound under heat, it acts as a leavening agent.

Baking Stone

A flat stone used to bake food on in ovens, such as pizza and bread. It absorbs some of the moisture which results in a crisp and brown crust.

Bannock

A flat bread made out of wheat flour or oatmeal, typically baked in an oven, or a skillet or griddle.

Batch

The amount of cookies, bread, and the like that can be made from one recipe without any alterations to the ingredients.

Batter

A mixture of ingredients, similar to dough, but with a much thinner consistency.

Beat

To stir together rapidly in order to incorporate air into the mixture. This can be done with a fork or whisk, as well as a food processor or electric mixer.

Bevel

The junction at which 2 planes meet at an angle other than 90 degrees, or to create such an angle.

Biscuit Method

The technique for blending cold fat into flour, in order to achieve a flakey texture, as can be found with biscuits.

Bleached Flour

Flour that's been oxidized using chemicals to achieve a flour that is ultra-white.

Blend

To mix 2 substances together so they incorporate well together.

Blind Baking

The process of baking pastry shells separately from the filling, and then baking again briefly after setting the filling, if needed.

Bloom

This is either:

- The activation of yeast
- The process of bread loaves opening along slashed marks
- The process of soaking gelatin in cold water before adding it to the recipe

Boil

To heat liquids until they reach a boiling point or to place something in a boiling liquid.

Braid

Weaving 3 or more long strands of dough together.

Braise

Cooking vegetables or meat with a little fat. First it is seared and then simmered with additional liquid, in a covered pan.

Bread Flour

Flour made of wheat with a fairly high gluten content (13-14%), typically used for making bread products.

Bread Scoring

Slashing along loaves so that they can expand as they bake.

Brown Rice

Whole grain rice that has been unpolished. It is the healthiest type, since only the husk has been removed.

Brown Sugar

Cane sugar that has some or all of its natural molasses.

Browned Butter

Butter that has been heated until browning starts and then cooled.

Butter

Cream that has been churned into a semi-solid form.

Buttercream

A common type of frosting, made by combining a type of fat with sugar.

C

Cacao

The tree with the seed pods that are used to make cocoa powder and cocoa butter.

Cake Flour

A flour made from soft wheat that has been finely milled with a low protein content (6-8%). Used for making cakes.

Capping

When a yeast loaf is under-proofed and the interior pushes the crust up to form a "cap" along the sides.

Caramelize/Caramelization

Heating until sugars on the surface of a food break down to form a brown coating that may be either sweet or savory.

Carryover Cooking

When food continues to cook after it's been removed from heat.

Cereal Grain

Grains and foods that are derived from them.

Chef

The French term for a starter, made from a small piece of leavened bread.

Chemical Leavening

A kind of leavening that reacts with substances in order to produce carbon dioxide so dough can rise.

Chill

To cool a mixture or bowl by putting it in ice or a refrigerator.

Chop

To use a sharp object, such as a knife, to cut something into small pieces.

Clarify

To make a substance pure or clear.

Coat

To cover a food thoroughly with a mixture, either liquid or dry.

Coating Consistency

The thickness of a liquid, usually when it is viscous enough to stick to a spoon without immediately draining off of it.

Cocoa Butter

The edible fat that is extracted from cacao beans.

Cocoa Powder

Powder made from cacao beans. It can be treated with alkalis in order to neutralize the natural acidity of cocoa.

Combine

To mix ingredients together.

Confectioner's Sugar

Very finely ground white sugar that dissolves easily and is often used for candy making, frosting, icing, and decorating desserts, such as cakes.

Cool

To let food sit after baking until it is no longer warm to the touch.

Cooling Rack

A grid of thick wire that can stand over a flat surface that is used to cool baked goods on after they come out of the oven.

Cornet

A container made out of a triangle, usually of parchment paper, that is used to pipe out icing or chocolate.

Corn Flour

Flour that is made from whole corn, sometimes called cornstarch.

Cornmeal

Dried corn kernels that have been ground into a meal that can be with fine, medium, or coarse.

Couche

(pronounced: COOSH)

The French word for a canvas cloth that is used to raise baguettes on.

Coulis

Fruit that has been pureed in order to make a dessert sauce.

Cream

To mix dry ingredients with a solid fat so as to incorporate air until it is creamy in consistency.

Crimp

The technique of pinching the sides and/or tops of pie or tart crusts.

Crumb

The interior texture of bread and other baked goods that varies depending on its hydration. The lower the hydration, the denser the crumb.

Cut In

To mix butter or shortening into flour by using a knife or cutter. This is also referred to as rubbing in.

D

Danger Zone

The temperature for food safety, at which perishable food shouldn't be left out in for over 2 hours.

Degerminated

Removing germ from a grain kernel, leaving the bran and endosperm behind.

Dilute

To thin a liquid by adding in another solvent, such as water.

Dissolve

To add an ingredient to a liquid in order to form a mixture or solution, until the solid elements are no longer remaining.

Distill

To concentrate or purify through a process involving heating and condensation.

Divide

To portion a dough or batter prior to shaping or panning. This is also referred to as scaling for equal portions.

Docking

To poke small holes into dough in order to allow for trapped air and steam to escape during the baking process.

Dough

A mixture of flour and liquids, and potentially other ingredients, that is thick enough to be handled, shaped, and kneaded.

Dough Enhancer

A mixture of dry ingredients that helps dough rise and have a softer texture, as well as extend a loaf's shelf life.

Dredge

To coat one ingredient with another dry ingredient, either before or after cooking, such as with powdered sugar or flour.

Drizzle

To pour a thin stream of a liquid, such as icing, on top of something.

Dust

To sprinkle with a powder, such as powdered sugar.

E

Ear

The section of dough that bakes out of a blooming section of a loaf.

Egg Wash

A mixture made of either the whole egg or parts of the egg and water or milk that is brushed onto the unbaked surface of a baked good in order to make the crust glossy or a rich color.

Emulsion

2 or more homogenous liquids that don't easily mix.

Endosperm

The protein center of a grain that forms starch and gluten and is the largest part of a grain kernel.

Enrich

To either improve or restore nutrients to a refined grain product, such as enriched flour.

Essence

An artificial substance that is cheaper and less potent than an extract.

Extract

A natural substance that has been extracted from its source, such as vanilla straight from a vanilla pod.

F

Fermentation

The process during which yeast consumes starches and sugars in dough to produce carbon dioxide that expands the dough and alcohol.

Firm Peaks

This refers to a stage in the whipping process when the peaks hold their shape more so than soft peaks and that have more distinct edges.

Flash Point

The temperature at which oil ignites if it comes in contact with a flame.

Foam

A mixture of yeast and water and potentially sugar that actively grows and expands.

Fold

To gently combine substances together in order to not deflate the texture. It is usually done with a whisk or spatula with dry to liquid ingredients.

Fondant

A coating made of powdered sugar, powdered gelatin, water, and more, often used for cakes.

Fry

To cook in heated fat.

G

Ganache

A kind of frosting that is made out of heavy cream and melted chocolate.

Garnish

To decorate a food by adding other foodstuffs, such as mint leaves, to either the food itself or the serving dish.

Gelatin

A stabilizing agent made of collagen, used to gelatinize a food.

Gelatinization

The chemical process during which starches expand and absorb water when heated.

Germ

The embryo of a cereal grain's seed, it contains fats, nutrients, and proteins.

Ghee

Clarified butter that has had lactose and milk solids removed. It does not need to be refrigerated and can be used in any kind of cooking.

Glaze

To coat with a thick sauce to make shiny, such as with butter.

Gluten

Proteins within flour that gives texture and structure to baked goods.

Gluten-Free

Ingredients or baked/cooked goods that do not contain gluten. Gluten-free bread, for example, is not made with wheat flour, but rather, other flours, such as coconut flour.

Glycemic Index (GI)

This refers to the index of how much glucose is present in blood after eating carbohydrates. Foods typically have a GI rating between 0 and 100, but depending on the person and their body's level of alpha-amylase levels, their body and blood sugar will react differently to the same foods.

Gourmet

Very high quality ingredients or food, usually prepared with great skill and presented in an artful manner.

Grain

These can refer to 2 things:

1. When referring to cereal grains, it means the grain or edible seeds that are produced by plants, such as rice, corn, millet, wheat, wild rice, and more, within the grass family.
2. The crumb of baked goods. As mentioned in the Crumb definition, this means the thickness, structure, and amount of air pockets within the product.

Grate

To rub a food against a grater in order to turn it into small pieces.

Grease

To rub butter, oil, fat, or shortening against the surface of a cooking pan, sheet, or utensil, in order to prevent food from sticking to it, or also on a food.

H

Hard Wheat

This refers to types of wheat that have a high protein content (10-12%), for hard winter wheat, and (10-15%) for hard spring wheat.

High-Altitude Baking

When adjustments will be needed for ingredients and oven temperatures at altitudes over 3500 feet.

Holding

To keep a baked good or product within the best possible environment for long-term storage or for the best quality serving.

Hone

This is either:

1. To sharpen a blade or other utensil
2. A device used to sharpen blades and other cutting tools

Hull

This is either:

1. The outer layer of a grain, such as corn.
2. To remove the hull, also called “dehulling”

Humidity

The amount of moisture in the air needed when making bread.

Hydration

The ratio of water to the flour within bread. Different hydration rates result in different consistencies.

I

Incorporate

To add a substance to another so that they are mixed together.

Induction

A cooktop heating method where the vessel is heated by electromagnetism. The vessels need to be either partially or entirely made of iron for this to work.

Infuse

To soak or steep or immerse something within a liquid so as to extract the flavors.

Ingredient

Anything that is added to a mixture, liquid, solid, etc.

Instant Yeast

A type of yeast that can be added directly to other dry ingredients so that the bread will only need a single rise. It has smaller granules and more live cells than active dry yeast.

Iodized Salt

Salt that has sodium iodide added to it in order to prevent hypothyroidism.

J

Juice

To cut and either squeeze or press a fruit or vegetable in order to extract the juice.

K

Knead

To manipulate a dough with a pressing and folding motion, either by hand or with a dough hook so as to make it smooth and elastic, as well as to help the gluten develop when used in making bread.

Kosher Salt

Salt without additives and that has coarse grains that some bakers and Jewish Kosher food processors prefer.

L

Laminate

To alternate layers of dough and butter, so as to assist in letting steam out and making a light, airy texture, as is commonly found in croissants and similar pastries.

Leaven/Leavening/Leavening Agent

This refers to:

1. An agent, such as yeast, that is used to expand dough so that it rises.
2. To add a leavening agent to a dough.

Levain

Also known as a sourdough bread starter, this is a fermented mix of water and flour that has yet to be added to the main dough.

Lukewarm

Neither hot nor cold, but slightly warm.

Lumpy

When the texture of a mixture, substance, or dough has lumps and isn't smooth.

M

Macerate

To soften a food by soaking it in a liquid.

Make-Up

To shape dough, such as into loaves. This includes the processes of scaling, molding, and panning.

Margarine

A butter substitute, made out of vegetable oil and other liquids.

Marzipan

A sweetened almond paste, commonly used to make candy figurines.

Mascarpone

A double- or triple-cream cheese that has at a minimum, 60-75% of milkfat.

Mash

To press in order to break down into smoother and/or finer pieces/consistency.

Mature

When the taste of a food has fully developed for optimal flavor.

Meal

Grain that has been coarsely ground down. It is coarser than flour, but finer than cracked grain.

Melt

To heat a solid food, such as chocolate, until it becomes a liquid.

Meringue

A mixture of sugar and beaten egg whites, it can be either soft or baked hard.

Millet

A finely ground flour that is naturally gluten-free. It is good for both sweet and savory baked goods. It usually needs a binder for structure.

Mince

To chop something into very small, fine pieces.

Mix

To combine substances together.

Molding

When dough is flattened and/or shaped into loaves or rolls or braids or twists.

Muffin Method

The mixing technique where dry and liquid ingredients are combined.

Multi-Grain

Any flour, cereal, meal, or grain that uses 2 or more grains.

N

Native

An ingredient that is indigenous to a particular region, such as how a black walnut is native to North America.

No-Knead

Also known as “batter breads”, this refers to breads with yeast that do not require kneading.

Non-Stick

When a pan or sheet has a substance on it that keeps food from sticking to it.

O

Oat Bran

The outermost layer of an oat grain kernel that is edible and high in soluble fiber.

Oils

Fats that can come from either plants or animals. Common cooking oils include: almond, avocado, canola, coconut, flax, hazelnut, hemp, olive, palm, safflower, sesame, and sunflower.

Oven-Spring

This refers to the “growth spurt” that yeast breads undergo until they hold their final shape and size.

Over-Proofing

This refers to when dough has been left to ferment for too long and won't spring back and likely won't dense when baked.

P

Panning

To place dough in or on pans that are ready for baking, such as with parchment or greasing.

Parboil

To boil for a short amount of time in order to cook slightly.

Parchment

This refers to either:

1. Parchment paper, a disposable, non-stick paper that is used to keep baked goods from sticking to a baking sheet or stone.
2. The rind/outer skin of a food like an orange.

Pare

To remove the parchment/rind/outer skin of vegetables or fruits with a peeler or knife.

Pastry Flour

A soft flour made of wheat with a 9-10% gluten content, commonly used for pastries.

Pectin

Often used to make jellies and fruit preserves, this is a natural sugar that works as a thickening agent.

Peel

This refers to either:

1. The rind or outer layer of a food, such as an orange.
2. To remove said outer layer.

Pinch

To press together with your fingers, such as at the edges of a pie crust.

Piping

This is the process of making decorations and borders with icing, such as from a pastry bag.

Portion

This refers to either:

1. To divide a dough or batter, such as to put in separate baking pans.
2. How much a serving per person is.

Pre-Ferment

A dough or batter that has been already fermented and is added to a dough to help it leaven.

Preheat

To heat the oven to the desired temperature needed in order to bake the product properly.

Proof/Prove

To let dough rise/the yeast in a dough activate.

Pulled Sugar

When thin pieces of sugar have been pulled and then cooled quickly so that they maintain a satiny-type sheen.

Punch Down

To deflate risen dough in order to release built-up gasses so that it can be more easily kneaded and shaped.

Puree

To mash or process cooked vegetables or fruits until they form a smooth, thick liquid.

Q

Quick Bread

Bread that doesn't need rising or kneading, so it is quick to make. It is usually chemically leavened, but sometimes uses fast-rising yeast.

Quinoa

(Pronounced: KEEN-wah)

A type of grain that has all essential amino acids and is considered a complete protein.

R

Rancid

When fats, oils, or nuts have spoiled and have a bad taste and/or smell.

Ratio

How much of one thing there is in comparison to another, such as the ratio of water to flour in a dough.

Raw

Food that has not been cooked, or is under a certain temperature. Liquids that are under 118 degrees Fahrenheit and dry foods that are kept under 150 degrees Fahrenheit are considered raw.

Reconstitute

To restore to a former condition by adding water, such as with dried vegetables.

Reduce

To thicken/reduce the amount of liquid by simmering or boiling, often done in order to intensify the flavor.

Rest

To let starches absorb liquid and gluten relax. Letting dough or batter rest makes it easier to shape.

Retard/Retardation

To chill dough in order to slow the fermentation process down, usually done to increase color and flavor.

Ribbon Stage

When a mixture is thick enough to leave ribbons when the dough is lifted.

Rise

When the dough increases in volume as the leavening agent causes the gas bubbles to expand.

Roll

This refers to either:

1. A small sweet or savory bread that has been smoothed and rounded.
2. To use a rolling pin in order to roll out dough so that it is flat and even, typically done in order to prep the dough for cookie cutting.

Rub In

To add a hard fat, like cold butter, into flour by rubbing them together with your hands until the mixture has a similar consistency and texture to breadcrumbs.

S

Salinity

The amount of salt in a liquid, food, or product.

Satinizing

To pull and fold sugar that has been cooked so as to make it pliable, called thus because it gives it a satin-like finish.

Saute

To cook by frying slightly over high heat, usually in a fat like butter or oil in an open and shallow pan, usually done to enhance flavor.

Scald

To heat liquids until they are almost boiling. Indicated by when small bubbles form around the edges of the pot or pan.

Scaling

To divide dough or batter by weight before placing it in a pan, for more accurate portioning.

Score

To slash the surface of a food, such as a bread loaf, so that it can open up when it bakes. It can often be done as a means of decoration, in addition to functionality.

Scratch Baking

A type of baking that requires a recipe and uses basic ingredients, such as flour, butter, and sugar, rather than using a mix.

Seize

When water is added to molten chocolate and the liquid cocoa butter is separated from the cocoa particles and sugar that absorb the water.

Self-Rising Flour

Different from all-purpose flour, this is a blend of baking powder, salt, and low-protein flour.

Separate

To remove the egg yolk from the white.

Shelf Life

How long a product can be used for while remaining fit for consumption.

Shortening

The fat that is added to a baking recipe; it can be butter, margarine, or another type.

Sift

To move dry ingredients, like flour, through a shifter (a sieve) to as to remove lumps, uneven particles, and to incorporate air.

Simmer

To bring a liquid to a temperature just below its boiling point and allowing it to bubble calmly.

Skim

To remove a substance from the surface of a liquid, such as from milk.

Slack Dough

Dough that is under-developed and has too much water or not enough flour.

Slake

To mix a powder with liquid so as to form a paste that can then be added to a greater amount of liquid without forming any lumps.

Slurry

The mix of cold liquid with a raw starch, usually flour and water, and is added to thicken sauces or soups.

Softened Butter

Butter that has been left at room temperature, so it is neither hard nor liquidated.

Soft Crack

When sugar forms pliable, hard threads that can bend before they break, often used for taffies.

Soft Peaks

When egg whites or cream has been whipped so that peaks form, that will bend to the side.

Soft Wheat

Wheat that has a lower protein or gluten strength, which is ideal for cookies, quick breads, and more.

Sponge

A type of pre-ferment used for 2 step dough processes. The sponge is made of yeast, flour, and some water, and is allowed to ferment before it is added to the other ingredients.

Sprinkle

To scatter sugar or another topping over the top of a baked good, such as powdered sugar over a pastry.

Stabilize

To set, to make a mixture resistant to changes in either positioning or condition.

Steam

To cook with steam, either with or without pressure, such as with dumplings.

Stiff Peaks

When peaks that form during whipping do not bend but remain upright.

Stir

To mix with a whisk or spoon in order to blend or ensure ingredients are cooked evenly.

Strain

To separate the solids from liquids.

Structure

The composition of a baked good.

Sugar

A carbohydrate that naturally occurs in fruits and vegetables and is most commonly used to sweeten baked goods or dishes. There are several different types: brown sugar, demerara sugar, granulated sugar, muscovado sugar, powdered sugar, raw sugar, and more.

T

Temper

To raise the temperature gradually, such as with chocolate and eggs.

Thicken

To make a liquid or mixture denser by adding another ingredient, such as flour or egg yolks.

Toss

To mix by lifting and dropping ingredients, such as with salads.

Tunneling

When there is a big air gap between the crumb and the crust of a loaf that typically results after the dough has been left to rise for too long.

Twist

To turn strands in opposite directions.

U

Unbleached Flour

Flour that has not been bleached by chemicals.

Underproofed

When shaped dough doesn't reach the desired volume or height prior to baking.

Unleavened

When baked goods do not use leavening agents, such as yeast.

V

Value-Added

Ingredients that increase the value of a baked good, either nutritionally or in market or consumer value.

Vent

An opening that lets steam escape a food as it escapes, such as in the top of a pie crust.

W

Wheat Flour

Flour made from any type of wheat grains.

Whip

To beat rapidly and lightly in order to increase the volume and add air to a mixture.

Whisk

To beat ingredients together so that they blend.

White Flour

Flour that has had everything removed except for the grain's endosperm in order to extend its shelf life and give it a whiter color.

Whole Grain

Grains with the bran, endosperm, and germ still intact. It may or may not still have the hull.

Whole Wheat Flour

Flour that is made from the entire kernel of a wheat grain.

X

XXX or XXXX Confectioners Sugar

How fine powdered sugar is. XXXX confectioners sugar is slightly finer than XXX confectioners sugar.

Xanthan Gum

A substitute for gluten used in baking.

Y

Yeast

A microorganism that is used for organic leavening, as its carbon dioxide release expands dough and makes it rise. There are many different types of yeast, such as: baking yeast, active dry yeast, instant yeast, cake yeast, and wild yeast.

Yield

How many baked goods that one episode gives.

Z

Zest

To flavor a baked food with a shaved peel of a citrus fruit.