

Tips For Perfect Scratch Baking

(NAPSA)—When you're ready to graduate from packaged cake mixes to riskier scratch baking, here are some useful tips to help bakers transition from premixes to the do-it-yourself method.

Scratch baking, unlike the packaged variety, involves assembling and mixing a range of ingredients: eggs, butter, milk, flour, sugar, flavorings, baking powder and, depending on the cake, chocolate or nuts. The first step in scratch baking is to study the recipe carefully and have all the ingredients on hand. At the least, first time out avoid deviating from the recipe or substituting ingredients.

Measurements, whether liquid or dry, are crucial in baking. Always use spoons and cups designed for dry measure so sugar, flour and other powdered ingredients can be leveled by sweeping a knife across the top. Spoon, never pack in, dry ingredients into measuring cups. Too much of one ingredient will disturb the formula, especially with baking powder, which will produce a metallic taste if too much is used.

Next, follow mixing and blending instructions carefully. With a mixer, resist overmixing, which can harden a cake. Undermixing can leave lumps or prevent the cake from rising.

The choice of bakeware is especially important. Non-stick metal bakeware, such as Baker's Secret, which is coated in a light gray non-



Non-stick metal bakeware releases easily, cleans effortlessly.

stick finish, is especially effective. The lighter color means pans won't absorb excess oven heat the way darker non-stick surfaces do, so oven temperatures need no adjustments. The bakeware's silicone non-stick surface offers easy release and effortless cleanup by hand or in the dishwasher.

Here's an easy scratch-baking cake recipe that's perfect for first-timers:

Golden Layer Cake

- 2 cups cake flour**
- 1 cup all-purpose flour**
- 1 tablespoon plus 1**
teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons**
milk
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract**
- 1 stick sweet butter, softened**
- 2 cups sugar**
- 4 large eggs**
- Frosting or icing of choice**

Preheat oven to 350° and position two racks in middle and lower thirds. Flour the bottoms of three 9-inch round Baker's Secret cake pans. In medium bowl, whisk cake and all-purpose flours with the baking powder and salt. Combine milk and vanilla in small pitcher.

In large bowl, using an electric mixer, beat the butter at medium speed until creamy. Add the sugar and beat until the mixture resembles moist sand, about 3 minutes. Beat in the flour mixture at low speed in 3 batches, alternating with the milk mixture; stop the mixer occasionally to scrape down the bowl. Add the eggs, 1 at a time, beating at medium speed and scraping bowl regularly between additions.

Divide the batter evenly among the cake pans. Bake for about 25 minutes, or until the layers are light golden and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Let the cakes cool in the pans for 10 minutes, then invert onto another rack and let cool completely.

Center a cake layer on a platter and spread with the frosting or icing of your choice. Repeat with the remaining layers.

For more information on baking, visit www.bakerssecret.com.