

# Appetite for Knowledge



## STRAIGHT FROM THE OVEN: BETTER BISCUITS

With just a few ingredients that I bet you already have on hand, homemade biscuits are simple to make from scratch. Biscuits are easy, but technique is crucial to properly make them!

No matter whether you make simple drop biscuits or cut-out biscuits, some simple principles remain constant. I am going to arm you with useful tips to make sure you end up with fluffy, flaky biscuits every time.

### BASICS OF BETTER BISCUITS INGREDIENTS

Start with good ingredients. Biscuits only use a few ingredients so choosing good-quality butter, milk, and flour will pay off in the flavor of the end product. Look at the expiration date of the supplies and replace any that are expired, old, or stale.

Use cold ingredients! Biscuits get their tender crumb and layers from the suspension of fat in flour. To achieve perfect, separate layers in biscuits, you need to start with very cold fats - usually butter or shortening. When cutting in fat, small lumps are coated in flour and melt during baking into layers. If the fat is too warm, the lumps will melt and form

a homogeneous dough, resulting in hard and tough biscuits.

### KEEP IT COOL!

Follow this tip: Put a metal or glass mixing bowl with the accurately measured dry ingredients and grated butter in the fridge or freezer the night before making biscuits. Keep things cold until it comes time to do the mixing and don't hesitate to stick the bowl in the freezer for a cool-off midway through if you feel the fat melting in your hands.

### HANDLING

Be gentle! The key to tender and delicious biscuits is to handle the dough as little as possible. Rub the fat and flour together by hand. It is almost like you're sifting through sand for buttery bits, rubbing them through your fingers with a slow "snapping" motion to create tender layers.

### MIXING

As you start mixing and stirring, be sure to use a light and gentle touch, as you want all the ingredients to just come together until the ingredients form a dough. You will still see chunks of butter and sprinkles of flour. Every time you

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# BUTTERMILK BISCUITS

From [Scott Peacock](#)

## Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon cream of tartar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
- 5 cups sifted and chilled unbleached all-purpose flour, plus more as needed
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, grated and chilled
- 2 cups chilled well-shaken cultured buttermilk, plus more as needed
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

## Preparation

1. Place a rack in the upper-middle position of the oven and preheat to 500°F.
2. Make your own leavening by sifting together the cream of tartar and baking soda.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together the cream of tartar, baking soda, flour, and salt. Add the butter and freeze it for at least 20 minutes. Quickly work the pieces of butter into the flour with a pastry cutter or rub it between your fingertips until coarsely blended lumps form.
4. Make a well in the center of the bowl and pour in the chilled buttermilk. Quickly mix the ingredients until the mixture just comes together and forms a shaggy mass. Add 1-2 more tablespoons of buttermilk if the mixture seems dry.
5. Immediately turn the dough out onto a generously floured surface and quickly knead the dough about ten times until a ball forms. Gently flatten the dough out a thickness of 3/4 inch.
6. With a fork that has been dipped in flour, pierce the dough at half-inch intervals. Flour a 2 1/2 or 3-inch biscuit cutter, and stamp out biscuits as close together as possible, taking care not to twist cutter. When you have run out of room to stamp out more biscuits, carefully reform the dough and press out as many as you can one more time.
7. Arrange the biscuits so almost touching on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake until golden, about 10-12 minutes. Remove from the oven and brush the tops with the melted butter. Serve warm with butter, honey and/or jam. Makes 10-12 biscuits.

touch, knead, and fold the dough, you are developing the gluten. The more the gluten develops the tougher and more prone to shrinking the biscuits will be. A smooth, homogeneous dough is not what you want.

A word of advice: Biscuits can be easily adapted to accommodate mix-ins. Play around with adding grated cheese or chopped fresh herbs. If you want to get more adventurous, meats and vegetables are delicious options. Add-ins should equal about 1/3 the amount of your dough. Any more than that and you risk weighing down the biscuits and losing the flaky texture.

## SHAPING

Dump the dough out onto a floured clean kitchen counter or large cutting board. Very lightly flour your hands so the batter does not stick to the cutting board. If you add too much flour, it will toughen the dough, so use extra flour sparingly. Pat the dough to the thickness, size, and shape given in the recipe. Prick the dough with a fork at half-inch intervals.

When cutting out the biscuits, use a strong, sharp biscuit cutter to cut straight down firmly through the dough. Do not twist the cutter as you cut the dough. Twisting the cutter would “seal” the edges of the biscuits, preventing them from reaching their full height potential. Dip the cutter in flour repeatedly to keep it from sticking.

Cut the biscuits as closely together as you possibly can, minimizing any excess between them. Each subsequent re-rolling



and cutting of the dough yields tougher and tougher biscuits. Transfer the dough carefully to your baking sheet without pressing on the sides.

## BAKING

Always bake biscuits immediately after forming them. The best baking sheets for biscuits are metal sheets without a lip on the side. If the sheet is too thin, the biscuits may burn. If the sheet has a lip on the side, the biscuits may not bake evenly. If there is enough fat in the biscuit dough, there is no need to grease the baking sheet.

If you want the biscuits to be browned on all sides, place them 1 inch apart on the baking sheet. Otherwise, place them about 1/4 inch apart. As the biscuits bake, they will cling to each other, rising bigger and taller.

Always preheat the oven when baking biscuits. The leavening will react to the high heat and height is created from those bits of fat throughout the biscuit creating pockets of steam that give biscuits their flakiness. This steam pushes the biscuit upward, resulting in a tall, light, and airy biscuit.

Remove them from the oven as soon as they are lightly browned. Brush the tops of the biscuit with melted butter and prepare for the best biscuit experience of your life.

Leftover biscuits can be stored in resealable plastic bags, and, when refrigerated, will keep about 4 days. They can be frozen for up to a month without drying out. Unbaked cut-out biscuits can be frozen up to 1 month. Freeze the biscuits individually on a baking sheet and, when frozen, wrap them in aluminum foil and transfer to resealable freezer bag. When ready to bake – don't thaw, but simply double the baking time of fresh biscuits.

Biscuits fresh from the oven are impossible to resist. With these simple tips, you'll have a plate of warm, flaky biscuits in no time. Try your hand at making biscuits with our Buttermilk Biscuit recipe.

## Sources

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