

Bake Better Cupcakes

Today we are going to talk about the dos and don'ts of making cupcakes. Have you ever made a batch of cupcakes and thought, "that wasn't supposed to happen"? When cupcakes are not made correctly, they may sink in the middle, the top of the cupcake may be sticky or dry, the chocolate chips or berries may sink, or the cupcakes may overflow.

Sunken Cupcakes

When baking, there is nothing more upsetting than taking cupcakes out of the oven and watching them deflate as they cool. The most common cause of this is over-mixing. It is very tempting to mix all the ingredients into a bowl, but this leads to an overworked batter. Eggs, butter, flour, and sugar have different consistencies, so there can be lumps of ingredients that stick together. The mixer usually gets turned to full power when you notice the lumps. This may take the lumps out, but the air in the batter will later escape while the cupcakes bake, causing them to flatten as they cool. To avoid this, follow a specific order of events when making the batter; Cream the butter and sugar, add the flour, and mix until just incorporated. Lastly, add the eggs, mixing one final time to combine.

Sticky Cupcakes

All fresh baked goods need time to cool, and cupcakes are no exception. Even though this is true, it is usually not easy to tell when a cupcake has cooled completely. When testing the cupcakes, you may be tempted to stick them in a container before frosting if they are cool on the top, but this is where most of the extra moisture in the cupcakes comes from. If there is any heat left in the cupcake, the container will condensate, causing a tacky cupcake. The best way to avoid a sticky cupcake is to let the cupcakes breathe. Let them cool for at least 2 hours before storing or decorating.

Dry Cupcakes

Baking is a science, and all cupcakes' ingredients are essential. If you use too much of a dry ingredient, like flour or cocoa, the cupcakes will come out dry. Another cause of dry cupcakes is overbaking due to the moisture baking out. Precision in measuring gives you consistent results. The first thing to do is make sure to correctly measure the ingredients. Make sure to use a liquid measure cup for liquids, pack down brown sugar, and properly measure the flour. To measure flour, stir it to break up clumps. Then use a spoon and lightly spoon the flour into a dry measuring cup. Use a flat straight edge to level off the top of the flour.

The next thing to do is time the cupcakes. Make sure to use a kitchen timer or time on your cell phone to monitor how long the cupcakes bake in the oven. Baking the cupcakes too long is a sure way to make them dry.

Chocolate Chips or Berries Sinking

Evenly distributed berries and chocolate chips in a cupcake are beautiful! This is easy to achieve with lightweight additions, like sprinkles. This is because sprinkles are lighter than the cupcake batter. Dried fruits, berries, and chocolate chips weigh more than the batter, so they naturally

sink to the bottom of the cupcake batter. To stop your add-ins from sinking, roll them in flour. This creates friction between the cake mix and filling, causing them to stay in place.

Cupcakes Overflowing

Everyone has done it: placed their cupcakes into the oven for them to transform into an overflowing muffin mess that has taken over the pan. The most common reason for this is the cupcake pan being overfilled. The trick to consistently shaped cupcakes is a scoop. That said, you must remember that cocoa, food coloring, and fruits can change the way cupcakes rise. Another trick is always to use the same size cupcake pan to get an idea of what amount of batter works best for the pan.

Use these tips for baking better cupcakes. Make dessert even sweeter this week by whipping up a quick batch of cupcakes.

(Sources: craftsy.com; www.foodnetwork.com; University of Wyoming Extension High-Altitude Cookbook)