

Better Buttermilk Biscuits

Flaky and buttery, a biscuit will lend itself to both sweet and savory applications. These tried-and-true tips will turn flat, dry biscuits into the best biscuits ever.

Because biscuit recipes call for so few ingredients, it is important to use high-quality ingredients. Use high-quality butter, dairy, and flour because you can taste the difference. Buttermilk adds tangy flavor as well as tenderness.

Flours vary in protein levels, affecting the texture of baked goods. Southern all-purpose flour is milled from soft winter wheat with less gluten-forming protein. To get soft, tender biscuits, use an all-purpose flour with a low percentage of protein. Look for flour with nine grams of protein per cup. Another option is to make a lower protein flour biscuit dough with a mixture of half cake flour and half all-purpose flour with 11-12 grams of protein per cup.

Baking powder acts as the leavening agent, most often in the recipe. Over time, it will lose its efficacy, so checking if the baking powder is fresh is crucial.

Measure and mix the dry ingredients thoroughly. If you don't mix the dry ingredients before adding the wet ingredients, you'll have excess pockets of leavening or salt in one area and not enough in another. The secret to better baking is weighing the ingredients – especially flour. One cup of flour is 125 grams.

Place the mixing bowl and dry ingredients in the freezer until they are cold. Cold biscuit dough produces puffy, flaky biscuits.

For flaky layers, use cold butter. Grate frozen butter instead of cubing it, this will cut into the biscuit dough more quickly than cubed butter.

One way to prevent butter from melting is to mix it with a food processor to avoid touching it with your hands. Add the dry ingredients and butter to the food processor. Pulse a few times until the mix resembles coarse sand, then transfer into a mixing bowl to add the wet ingredients. Do not add the liquid to the food processor, and never mix the dough with your hands; use a spatula or spoon.

The biscuit method involves first cutting the fat in the dry ingredients until the mixture resembles coarse sand. Then, the liquid ingredients are added. Mix until barely combined and shape until the dough just starts to come together. It'll look crumbly but come together as you knead it. Overworking and over-handling biscuit dough will result in tough, hard, and flat biscuits.

Work on a cold wood or metal surface, if possible. Roll out the biscuit dough; however, for extra flakiness, pat out the dough into a rectangle and fold it over on itself twice, like a letter. This will give the biscuits a head start on forming layers.

When you use a cutter, flour it and press down through the dough, no twisting! Twisting the cutter "seals" the edges, which keeps the biscuits from rising high. Cut the biscuits as close together as possible. Only re-roll the dough once.

To get the best rise or height, allow biscuits to touch each other on the sheet pan or skillet when baking. As they bake, they will cling to each other, rising bigger and taller.

Bake biscuits in a fully preheated oven for best results. Bake the biscuits until they are golden brown and have risen.

Store biscuits in an airtight container at room temperature. They should be stored in the refrigerator if made with cheese, cream cheese, meat, or other perishable foods.

Homemade buttermilk biscuits are buttery and soft with many flaky layers. Make your go-to recipe even better with these biscuit tips.