

Healthy Baking Ingredient Swaps

Do you celebrate the festive holiday season by baking family-loved goodies? With holiday baking comes additional calories, sugar, and fat added to our diets while providing little nutritional value. While baked goods have a reputation for being a major source of added sugars and solid fats, they can still be an enjoyable part of a well-balanced eating pattern. Several easy baking substitutions can help reduce the amount of calories, sugar, and fat in baked goods without compromising taste. Follow these smart substitution tips to help reduce baked goods' added sugar and saturated fat content.

Every ingredient serves a purpose, and starting with small changes will help you make healthy and successful baking substitutions.

Reducing the amount of sugar by 25% in recipes won't affect the final product and will reduce the calories in baked goods. If your recipe calls for 1 cup of sugar, decrease the amount to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup.

Use 1 cup of unsweetened applesauce for 1 cup of sugar and reduce the recipe liquid by $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. The final product will be less sweet and more dense than the original recipe.

In most recipes, half of the all-purpose flour can be replaced with white whole wheat or whole wheat flour. If a recipe calls for 1 cup of all-purpose flour, use $\frac{1}{2}$ cup all-purpose flour and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole wheat or white whole wheat flour. In addition, you can replace the flour in recipes with 25% nut flour, such as almond flour.

Another unique option is to replace 1 cup of pureed black beans with 1 cup of flour in brownies.

Use lower-fat versions of milk, buttermilk, and yogurt in baking recipes. In recipes that call for heavy cream, use evaporated skim milk instead.

One cup of nonfat Greek yogurt can be used for 1 cup of butter or oil.

If a recipe calls for 1 cup of oil, butter, or shortening, use $\frac{1}{2}$ cup applesauce and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup oil, butter, or shortening without compromising taste.

Use 1 cup mashed banana for 1 cup oil or butter in brownies and cookies. Bananas also add sweetness, so you might also try using less sugar.

Pumpkin puree is used in recipes to decrease fat. Replace $\frac{1}{2}$ of the fat in the recipe with plain pumpkin puree.

Brownies, chocolate cookies, and chocolate cakes can swap 1 cup of pureed avocado for 1 cup of butter.

Prune puree works well for replacing fat in chocolate desserts, spice cakes, and cookies. Replace 50% of the fat in the recipe with prune puree or pureed prune baby food.

When substituting eggs in recipes, it is important to know the purpose of the egg. If the final product is light and fluffy, then the egg is used for leavening. A dense and thick product usually uses eggs for binding.

Substitutions for 1 egg as a binder include:

- ½ of a medium banana
- ¼ cup fruit puree
- 1 tablespoon ground flaxseed or chia seeds with 3 tablespoons of water (let sit for 5 minutes to gel)

Substitutions for 1 egg as leavening include:

- Commercial egg replacer
- Two egg whites
- 1½ tablespoons vegetable oil mixed with 1½ tablespoons water and 1 teaspoon baking powder per egg
- 1 teaspoon baking powder + 1 teaspoon vinegar

I love having the option to swap ingredients out if I don't have them on hand or want to make my baked goods healthier. Swapping traditional baking ingredients with healthier options lets anyone enjoy baked goods without guilt. Still, the key here is moderation. Happy baking!

(Sources: americancakedecorating.com; www.eatright.org; yourchoicenutrition.com; www.yourcupofcake.com)